The Talented Mr. Ripley

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF PATRICIA HIGHSMITH

Patricia Highsmith was born in Texas and was raised between there and New York City. She is known the world over for her oft-adapted psychological thrillers and crime novels, one of the most famous of which is *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. A graduate of Barnard College, Highsmith began to gain recognition for her short stories in the early 1940s, and, in 1950, published her first novel, *Strangers on a Train*, to great acclaim. The book was later adapted into a film directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Described as "difficult," "cruel," "rough," and "relentlessly ugly" by various editors, publishers, and acquaintances, Highsmith struggled with depression and disordered eating throughout her life. Highsmith, a lesbian, navigated tumultuous relationships with men and women alike throughout her adult life. She is credited with writing and publishing (under a different pen name) the first lesbian novel with a happy ending, *The Price of Salt*, in 1952. in 1963, she moved to Switzerland, where she lived until her death in 1995.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the wake of World War II, a period of American innovation and wealth began in earnest, while a devastated Europe began to repair itself from the war. Taking advantage of this new wealth and mobility, Highsmith's American characters traipse through Europe, where the exchange rate is in their favor. The privileges and anonymity of life abroad present characters with an alternative to their lives in the States, one that's both bohemian and bourgeois. As the world settled back into place and new countries, governments, and commitments to peace solidified, the shifting boundaries and the sense of possibility that Europe offered proved irresistible to Americans who sought change, freedom, or even solace in the new postwar landscape.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

With *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Highsmith (who was already a seasoned writer of thrillers, such as *The Two Faces of January* and *The Cry of the Owl*) embarked on a challenge to reinvent the genre by creating a protagonist whose sociopathic ways would not keep audiences from rooting for his success and vindication. At the time of *Ripley's* publication, popular thrillers such as *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and *Murder on the Orient Express* focused on characters who either found themselves wrongly accused of a crime, or were otherwise unwittingly involved in the investigation of a murder or mystery. In writing *Ripley*, Highsmith created a main character who dives headlong into a life of betrayal, deceit, and crime, inspiring later novelists such as Anthony Burgess (*A Clockwork Orange*), Bret Easton Ellis (*American Psycho*), and Gillian Flynn (*Gone Girl*) to create similarly devious and fearless protagonists.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Talented Mr. Ripley
- **When Written:** 1953
- **Where Written:** Lenox, MA
- **When Published:** 1955
- **Literary Period:** Modernism; Realism
- **Genre:** Fiction; psychological thriller; suspense; mystery; international crime
- **Setting:** New York, NY; Italy; France; Greece
- **Climax:** Tom Ripley murders his acquaintance Dickie Greenleaf off the coast of San Remo in order to adopt Dickie's identity as his own.
- **Antagonist:** Tom Ripley
- **Point of View:** Third person narrative which closely tracks the thoughts and feelings of Tom Ripley

EXTRA CREDIT

Ripleymania. With *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, Highsmith created a brand new kind of hero: the evil antihero. *Ripley* was such an iconoclastic novel with such a brand-new idea—what if the bad guy gets away with it?—that it captivated readers the world over and inspired a series of sequels, known by fans as "the Ripliad." Highsmith's Ripley novels have been adapted into movies starring Alain Delon, Dennis Hopper, Matt Damon, and John Malkovich (to name a few) as the face of the murderous Mr. Ripley. *Ripley* continues to inspire the way we think about "heroes" today—*Kill Bill*, *Breaking Bad*, *Dexter*, and even *Suicide Squad* are some television shows and movies that feature protagonists whose morals are, in a Ripley-esque way, dubious.

The Generous Ms. Highsmith. After her death in 1995, Patricia Highsmith bequeathed her entire estate to the Yaddo artists' colony in upstate New York, where she completed work on a draft of *Strangers on a Train* in 1948. The colony is renowned for supporting the work of celebrated writers, such as Truman Capote, David Foster Wallace, and John Cheever.

PLOT SUMMARY

Tom Ripley lives in a shabby brownstone in New York City and

works as a casual extortionist when he meets Herbert Greenleaf. Herbert, the father of Tom's onetime acquaintance Dickie Greenleaf, is desperate for Dickie to return from Europe, where he's living as a painter in a small Italian village called Mongibello. Herbert offers to pay Tom's way if Tom will travel to Europe and convince Dickie to come home. Tom, who grew up poor and who remains envious of the lifestyles of the wealthy people he meets in New York, accepts the offer and boards a boat bound for Europe.

In Italy, Tom orchestrates a casual run-in with Dickie. Dickie and Marge Sherwood are the only two Americans in Mongibello, and Tom, though sensing a strained sexual tension between the two of them, attempts to embed himself into their world. At first, Dickie is cold and standoffish. However, Tom confesses to Dickie that he's been sent by Herbert, and Dickie, amused by Herbert's desperation, accepts Tom as a friend. Together, the two travel around Italy, and become incredibly close. Tom moves into Dickie's home, and Dickie lends Tom his clothes and even calls him "Mr. Greenleaf" jokingly. Marge, upset and perturbed by the two men's sudden closeness, confronts Dickie, and Dickie's coolness toward Tom returns. Tom, realizing that his luxurious and carefree existence in Italy may be coming to an end, decides to murder Dickie and assume his identity. As a gifted forger and impersonator, Tom believes that the feat will be a simple one. On a trip to San Remo, Tom and Dickie take a **boat** out into the bay and, while they are at sea, Tom kills Dickie by striking him with an oar and sinking his body. After sinking the boat, Tom returns to shore and begins to cover up his crime and take the steps needed to become Dickie Greenleaf.

Tom absconds to Rome, where he slightly changes his appearance, rents an apartment under Dickie's name, and spends Dickie's money. He wears Dickie's clothes and **expensive rings**, and luxuriates in his decadent new life. He writes letters to Marge, explaining that he has had to move away and cannot see her in order to figure out his feelings toward her, and to Dickie's parents, explaining his decision to remain in Italy after all. When another American, Freddie Miles, obtains "Dickie's" address and arrives for a visit, Tom answers the door as himself and narrowly avoids being found out, though Freddie is suspicious—after all, Tom is dressed in Dickie's clothes and is wearing Dickie's jewelry. Tom puts Freddie off, assuring him that Dickie is just downstairs at a nearby café, but, on his way out, Freddie encounters "Dickie's" landlady, who insists that "Signor Greenleaf" is the only resident of the apartment and is, in fact, right upstairs. When Freddie returns to investigate, Tom murders him as well, and, after staging a scene of drunken revelry, drives Freddie's body out to a cemetery and abandons it behind a headstone.

When the police discover Freddie's body, they question "Dickie," believing unquestioningly that he his who he says he is. Tom is relieved, but soon encounters a newspaper headline which describes the discovery of a bloodstained boat in the San Remo bay. Realizing that if a body is found in the water as well it will be assumed to be that of Tom Ripley—since Tom has been living as Dickie and has left no trail of his "own" whereabouts—and "Dickie Greenleaf" will be a suspect in not just one but two murders—that of Freddie Miles, and that of Tom Ripley. Marge arrives in town, and Tom speaks to her over the phone as himself, assuring her that everything is all right, before leaving for Sicily as Dickie in order to abandon the trail of Dickie's identity there and return to Italy as Tom Ripley. After several days of "behaving" once again as Tom Ripley, he sends two suitcases of Dickie's belongings ahead to Venice, in case he wants to claim them sometime in the future, and returns to Rome as himself. When he does, the newspapers describe the search for a "missing" Dickie Greenleaf. A search ensues, and garners more and more attention in the Italian press. Tom moves to Venice, where he attends parties and fields questions as to Dickie's whereabouts. Soon, Marge arrives in town, and, after spotting Dickie's rings in Tom's apartment, comes to the conclusion that Dickie must have committed suicide—he would never, she insists, be without his rings. Herbert arrives in Italy as well, with an American investigator, but "Dickie's" trail has gone cold. Tom, in one brazen, final act of deceit, composes a letter from "Dickie" which bequeaths his entire estate unto Tom. Though nervous to go through with such a huge endeavor, Tom forwards the letter to Herbert, then embarks on a journey to Greece. However, after the discovery of Dickie's trunks at the American Express in Venice, Tom fears that he will be found out when the authorities obtain his fingerprints. Upon docking in Greece, Tom notices policemen on the shore, and is sure that his streak of luck and deceit has run out. However, the police do not stop him when he disembarks the ship. Confused, Tom heads to the American Express to collect his mail—a letter from Herbert has arrived, acquiescing to "Dickie's" wishes that Tom be the sole inheritor of his estate and confirming that the funds will be transferred to Tom shortly. Relieved, Tom hails a cab, and instructs the driver to take him to the finest hotel in town.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Tom Ripley – Tom Ripley, who is simultaneously the novel's protagonist and antagonist, has a gift for forgery, impersonation, and imitation, and he uses these skills to his advantage at every available opportunity. Slick and slippery, Tom mirrors the tastes and affectations of whatever company he keeps. After being sent to Italy to retrieve Dickie Greenleaf, a casual acquaintance who has run away to live a life of bohemian luxury, Tom becomes obsessed with befriending Dickie. When Dickie's friend and oft-spurned romantic devotee Marge Sherwood suggests to him that Tom's motivations are devious at best and dangerous at worst, Dickie pulls away from

Tom, sending Tom into a jealous spiral that leads him to murder Dickie and overtake his identity, using his cunning to remain one step ahead of the law for the remainder of the book. Tom's gifts for imitation and impersonation belie a deep set of insecurities. Orphaned and raised by his cruel Aunt Dottie, Tom has always felt like a burden to others and has never felt secure in the value of his own personality. In this way, his need to transform into Dickie in order to feel worthy of acceptance and love shows that self-hatred is one of his primary motivations. Another motivation, which is never explicitly revealed, is his potential homosexuality, which he has never accepted in himself. Perhaps, Highsmith implies, Tom killed Dickie because it was the next best thing to loving him, an act Tom could not allow himself.

Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf – Dickie Greenleaf, an acquaintance of Tom Ripley's, is the cool, vain heir to a shipbuilding company who has absconded to Italy in order to live a life of luxury far from the watchful gaze of his overbearing parents. Dickie barely remembers Tom upon his arrival, but he nonetheless invites Tom to join his and his girlfriend Marge's small social circle in Mongibello. Dickie's luxurious, bohemian life is filled with lavish dinners, parties, trips, and possessions, which inspires awe and jealousy in the naïve, covetous, and sexually conflicted Tom. Tom's obsession leads him to murder Dickie on **a boat** in San Remo, sink his body, and assume his identity by claiming his valuable clothes and **rings.** Though he feels no remorse for the murder, Tom is vaguely haunted by visions of Dickie, drenched and alive, screaming, "I swam!" Dickie is physically absent for a sizable portion of the novel, but his presence inhabits nearly every page, and his influence over Tom, even in death, creates a whirlpool of deceit and greed. Dickie embodies themes of wealth, luxury, excess, and escape.

Marjorie "Marge" Sherwood – An expat, writer, and resident of Mongibello, Marge Sherwood is Dickie's on-and-off romantic interest and Tom's major rival for Dickie's affections. Marge is creative and kind, but hopelessly lovesick for Dickie, and she often allows herself to be treated unfairly at his hands. When she senses an attachment between Tom and Dickie, she reveals her suspicions about Tom to Dickie, which creates a rift between the two men and leads Tom to resent Marge. After Tom murders Dickie, he returns to Mongibello and writes to Marge as Dickie, describing his need to distance himself from her so that he can ascertain how he really feels about her. As Marge and Tom correspond throughout the novel—with Tom alternately writing to her as Dickie and as himself—the text reveals Marge to be a sharp and rightly defensive woman whose strong moral compass and sure sense of intuition fall on deaf (or dead) ears.

Frederick "Freddie" Miles – One of Dickie's expat acquaintances, Freddie is an "overweight American [with] carrot-red hair" who is "the son of an American hotel-chain owner" and a "self-styled playwright." Freddie's extravagant manner and off-putting looks make him hateful to Tom, though his love of revelry and excess is what draws Dickie and Marge to him. Freddie inadvertently drives a wedge between Tom and Dickie through his plans for a "bang-up" ski trip to Cortina, from which Tom is excluded. After Tom murders Dickie and moves to Rome in order to overtake his identity, Freddie tracks "Dickie" down. When Freddie begins to piece together the truth of the situation, Tom murders him. Freddie's murder then becomes a popular news item in the Italian and European press, and the unending, high-profile coverage is what eventually forces Tom to abandon his life as Dickie and return to his own identity.

Herbert Greenleaf – Dickie's father, and the owner of a shipbuilding company specializing in "small sailing boats." Herbert pays Tom's way as he travels to Italy, hoping that Tom will convince Dickie to return home to helm the family business and be near his dying mother. Through Herbert's letters to Tom, readers watch as Herbert's demeanor goes from hopeful to despondent, and eventually cold and disappointed. When "Dickie" disappears, Herbert travels to Europe in order to aid in the investigation. His love for his son and his desire to be reunited with him is, in many ways, a catalyst for the entirety of the novel's events, and it's Herbert's kind, generous nature which makes him easy prey in Tom Ripley's game.

Aunt Dottie – Tom's much-loathed Aunt Dottie raised him in Boston after his parents' death, though she constantly complained about it. She teased and taunted Tom cruelly, and often called him a "sissy," comparing him to his father, whom she insisted had also been a "sissy." She sends Tom infrequent checks and he occasionally writes letters to her.

Cleo Dobelle – One of Tom's friends in New York, a painter of miniatures who lives in her parents' large home on the Upper East Side. Though Tom and Cleo are close and have "taken to each other from the very first night," there are no sexual or romantic undertones between the two of them.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Emily Greenleaf – Dickie's mother, whom Tom describes as "formal yet with [a] naïve goodwill-toward-all." Emily has fallen ill with leukemia, and for that reason she and her husband are desperate to bring Dickie home to share in her final months.

Fausto – Fausto is Dickie and Tom's Italian tutor. He is a vivacious young Italian man and a "card-carrying Communist" who is native to Milan but a frequent visitor to Mongibello.

Marcellus "Marc" Priminger – Tom's former housemate, a wealthy man who has a "hobby" of bringing young men in need of financial assistance into his home and putting them up.

Bob Delancey – Tom's roommate in New York at the novel's beginning. Not quite a friend, Bob doesn't know much detail of Tom's life.

Anna and Ugo – Tom's servants in Venice.

Ermelinda – Dickie's maid and cook in Mongibello.

Tenente Roverini – A lieutenant with the Roman police who questions Tom as to Dickie's whereabouts in the wake of Freddie Miles's murder (at the hands of Tom-as-Dickie.)

Signora Buffi – The landlady who rents Tom-as-Dickie his apartment in Rome.

Alvin McCarron – An American detective whom Herbert Greenleaf brings over to Italy in order to conduct an investigation of Dickie's disappearance.

Contessa Roberta "Titi" della Latta-Cacciaguerra – A countess and an acquaintance of Tom's in Venice.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

OBSESSION, IDENTITY, AND IMITATION

At the start of the novel, Tom Ripley is unhappy in every aspect of his life. He lives in a rundown apartment, which is the latest in a long series of rundown apartments, and he is working as a low-level con man. He is ashamed of and embarrassed by every aspect of his existence, and he feels that he deserves more from life. Tom's gifts as a forger, as well as his ingenuity and cunning as an impersonator, grow out of this deep insecurity in his own personal identity. As a result, Tom's obsession with Dickie provokes him to reject his own identity and claim Dickie's identity, thereby gaining the life, wealth, and possessions that Tom has come to believe are rightfully his.

The word "obsession" does not appear once in the novel, but the book is saturated with questions of what creates obsession and what calamity can come of it. Tom's difficult childhood, spent under the watchful eye of his cruel Aunt Dottie, has rendered him "naïve" in many ways and without "enough time to learn and grow." This contributes to Tom's sponge-like persona, and his ability—or even desperation—to absorb the knowledge, qualities, and characteristics of others, such as Herbert, Marge, and Dickie. Through Tom, Highsmith is constructing a cautionary tale regarding the dangers—to oneself and to others—of not ever forming a true or concrete identity. Without a clear identity, Highsmith suggests, the individual has no choice but to consume the identities of others, to dangerous and maddening ends.

Throughout the novel, Marge repeatedly calls into question the true nature of Tom and Dickie's relationship, believing their connection to each other to be toxic and obsessive, and perhaps more than platonic. Dickie tells Tom "clearly" that he is "not queer," though Marge believes Tom is "queer," and, as Dickie and Tom grow closer, Marge's suspicions only deepen. The sexual tension between Tom, Dickie, and Marge throughout the novel fuels each character's obsession and vanity. Tom's obsession with Dickie creates within Dickie an obsession regarding his own appearance, and causes Marge to fixate on her own rejection. This triumvirate of obsessions, all linked and all centered on Dickie, is engineered by Highsmith to illustrate not just the danger of obsession with another, but also obsession with the self—just as it's important to *have* a self, it's equally important not to worship the self, because it makes fools of Marge and Dickie, blinding them to their dangerous circumstances.

Highsmith often makes reference to the uncanny physical similarities between Tom and Dickie. She creates this doppelganger effect between the two men both for the sake of narrative convenience (Tom can easily convince people that he is Dickie) and narrative intrigue (seeing themselves reflected in one another creates tension, curiosity, and mutual attachment). However, this confusion of Dickie and Tom's identities sets the stage for the novel's central tragedy. As soon as Tom feels that Dickie is becoming distant, the magnitude of his panic leads him to the extreme conclusion that "he could become Dickie Greenleaf." In a way, this is simultaneously an attempt to make sure he isn't ever completely cast off by Dickie, and a way to soothe his bruised ego after Dickie's rejection by becoming someone he considers to be better than himself. The doppelganger effect confuses and deepens the motives and desires that lead Tom to become Dickie; is Tom trying to protect Tom, destroy Tom, or both? The line between the two men is so fine and so porous that crossing it becomes, to Tom, a kind of deadly game in which the rewards of winning are as alluring as the thrill of the charade itself.

WEALTH, LUXURY, AND EXCESS

Highsmith's descriptions of Tom and Dickie's romps through Europe are alluring—they are some of the most lushly-worded parts of her book—and they make clear that wealth enables Dickie to do whatever he pleases. His life as a "painter" in Mongibello comes with a home, servants, and lavish lunches, dinners, and trips across Europe—often on a whim. By creating a portrait of excess and allowing readers to view it through the eyes of a poor man (Tom Ripley), Highsmith both venerates and decries life lived in the lap of luxury.

Highsmith renders Dickie's existence in Europe in such high detail that the prose becomes overwhelmed and saturated with luxury; she creates excess in her writing the same way Dickie experiences excess in his life. The beautiful prose and the glut of detail invite readers into a relationship with wealth and excess that mirrors Tom's. Just as Tom is overwhelmed and

entranced by Dickie's life, the reader is inundated by alluring details and pulled into an admiration of luxury through Highsmith's gorgeous descriptions. In addition, the many privileges of Dickie's life are rattled off in a blur, so that none of the details alone even seem to matter—this formless ambiance of wealth and materialism attracts Tom more than any individual aspect of Dickie's life does. The way privilege is taken for granted—by Dickie, by Marge, and, eventually, by Tom himself—is Highsmith's tongue-in-cheek indictment of the blindness of the upper class to their own privilege and to the plight of those who are worse off. Her portrait of luxury also reveals the wastefulness, pettiness, and false sense of security that wealth, in Highsmith's estimation, can create.

As the novel unfolds, Tom's covetousness and sense of entitlement become a large part of how he justifies Dickie's murder, and how, once the murder is done, he assumes Dickie's life and identity while feeling remarkably little regret or remorse. Toward the end of the novel, when it seems as if Tom is about to be caught in his enormous lie, he wonders: "Supposing they got him and gave him the electric chair—could that death equal in pain, or could death itself, at twenty-five, be so tragic, that he could not say that the months from November until now had not been worth it? Certainly not." Even on the verge of a death sentence, Tom feels that his murderous, deceitful ways are "worth it" in order to glimpse, for even just a few months, the luxurious life of Dickie Greenleaf. Highsmith highlights this egregious immorality as a way to demonstrate the corrupting power of wealth, and she allows Tom to go unpunished to reveal the unfair protective powers wealth can bestow. Tom is so beholden to wealth and greed that he does unspeakable things in pursuit of it—it's a double bind for justice, then, that once he becomes wealthy through murder, his wealth protects him from facing the consequences of his reprehensible actions. Tom's ability to sneak by his acquaintances and the authorities is Highsmith's indictment not just of Tom's actions in pursuit of wealth, but of the vapid, destructive, and unjust underbelly of wealth itself.

APPEARANCE VS. REALITY

Nothing is ever quite as it seems in *Mr. Ripley*. Tom's principal talent is presenting himself as other than he is, and this is the act from which he derives the most joy in his life. That shapeshifting quality, however, makes readers rightly suspicious of the outward appearances of several of the novel's major characters and settings. Tom Ripley inspires intrigue, suspicion, unease, and disorientation at every turn and, through the lens of his experiences, Highsmith argues that secrecy and deception and the gulf they create between appearance and reality are integral components of society and the self.

Throughout the book, Highsmith charts Tom Ripley's constantly escalating rejection of himself and his need to convince individual after individual that he is other than what he truly is. Tom represents himself as an IRS agent to the individuals he's casually defrauding at the novel's start, and he falsely represents himself as a close friend of Dickie's to Dickie's father, Herbert (though, in reality, they're only acquaintances). This contributes to the sense that characters' statements and appearances should not be taken at face value. Sometimes, however, Tom even uses the truth to be manipulative: upon his arrival in Italy, he admits to Dickie that Herbert has sent him, thereby manipulating Dickie into accepting him by invoking his father (and implying that Tom made the trip out of familial concern, rather than a desire for Herbert's financial compensation). This further confuses the issue of appearance and deception, as even the truth is not off limits to manipulative twisting.

The outward appearance of Dickie's life is one of luxury, intrigue, and a certain undeniable sensual allure. However, Highsmith imbues Dickie's apparently charmed life with a sense of burden. He is the unwilling heir to his father's shipping business—a burden he feels he must flee to Italy to escape—and his mother Emily is ill with leukemia. His abandonment of his family in their time of need is cruel, but Dickie's inability to cope with the expectations of his family shows that the appearance of ease and luxury does not encompass the full picture of Dickie's life and troubles. Furthermore, though he insists he's "not queer," Dickie's lack of interest in Marge—and lack of more than a passing interest in any woman—combined with his tumultuous, codependent friendship with Tom belies a sexual insecurity, and perhaps even a repressed sexual identity. The undercurrents of Dickie's personality—his need for solace, his moods, his apparent struggle with the implications of his close relationship with Tom—are shoved down, only perceptible to readers due to Tom Ripley's watchful eye and careful intuition. The deception necessary in order for Dickie to keep up appearances drives a wedge between him and Tom and ultimately leads to Dickie's demise.

In a novel preoccupied with its characters' deceptions perpetrated for the sake of appearances, it's important to consider the manipulations Highsmith makes in addition to—or alongside—those of her characters. Highsmith couches her somewhat anarchic, insidious tale of the vindication of a murderous, manipulative villain within the structure of a thriller or suspense novel—a genre in which she'd established herself as a master. Though the novel takes on the appearance of a suspense story, it wrestles with deeper questions of deception, secrecy, obsession, and denial, and it manipulates its readers into sympathizing with a sociopath. The novel itself, then, uses the slick appearance of a thriller novel to conceal the reality that it is a dark meditation on greed, violence, and human nature. Highsmith is using all the forces at her disposal to remind readers to be discerning about the disjunction between

appearance and reality, lest—like Tom—we slip into complacency and become unable to discern the truth of either.

ESCAPES

Every major character in *Mr. Ripley* is running from something: Dickie Greenleaf flees a life in New York that he doesn't want, Tom Ripley runs from his poverty and self-loathing by escaping from his own identity, and Marge Sherwood escapes the realities of the writing life and the fear that her book won't ever be published. Furthermore, by allowing Tom Ripley to make the ultimate escape at the novel's end—an escape from justice—the novel configures escape as a moral question. Though readers are meant to root for Tom Ripley's escape, Highsmith intentionally raises the question of what rooting for such a despicable person means—does it shirk responsibility, accountability, and decency? Thus, one of the novel's central questions is whether a physical escape can ever equate with a moral one.

"His stories were good because he imagined them intensely, so intensely that he came to believe them," Highsmith writes of Tom. Tom's escape into the stories he creates in order to cover up his abduction of Dickie's life and identity demonstrates his ability to persuade himself of fiction upon fiction. He is such a seamless impersonator because he is able to use his vivid and twisted imagination to escape into a reality in which his falsehoods are truths—in other words, he comes close to actually believing that he is Dickie. However, this escape attempt fails when he is forced to return to living as Tom. Highsmith's unwillingness to let Tom fully escape into Dickie's identity forces Tom to grapple, to some extent, with what he has done. He must acknowledge that a part of his plan has failed, but instead of this accountability leading him to a moral revelation, it propels him into another means of escaping his own half-formed, loathsome identity: the thrill of creating another web of deception in which he lives as himself and covers up his previous actions while continuing to amass Dickie's wealth.

Toward the novel's end, it seems as if the jig is up and Tom's capture by the authorities is imminent. When he arrives in Greece, Tom sees policemen waiting on the docks, and he accepts his fate—but the policeman do not pay him any attention. Thrilled by the realization of his final, ultimate escape from justice, Tom hails a cab and directs the driver to take him to the best hotel in town. The conventions of heist narratives, hero's journeys, and neat resolutions have conditioned readers to root for this escape. Therefore, by allowing Tom to escape without facing justice for his crimes, Highsmith makes readers—who are on Tom's side—complicit in supporting his immorality. Highsmith then holds readers accountable by forcing them to have the moral reckoning that Tom does not—what does it say about them that they have rooted for this villain against all common sense and decency? Furthermore, Highsmith subtly hints that Tom's reckoning may come, too. Despite having pulled off his final escape, Tom is haunted by the prospect that he'll see policemen—real or imagined—waiting for him wherever he goes. His conscience is not a healthy engine or a reliable one, but it exists nonetheless, and despite having physically escaped accountability for his crimes, readers are left with the impression that Tom will never truly escape from the magnitude of all the destruction he has caused.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

DICKIE'S RINGS

Dickie Greenleaf is never without his rings, which are physical markers of his wealth, status, and vanity. Though the vast majority of Dickie's clothes and accessories are Italian-made, his rings, Tom notes, are American—a daily reminder of the life and opportunities Dickie has purposefully left behind. The rings are so closely associated with Dickie's being that it's when Tom thinks of stealing Dickie's rings that he realizes that he actually wants to kill Dickie, and once Dickie is dead Tom is careful to take the rings before sinking the body, since the rings are an integral part of Tom's Dickie disguise. Dickie's rings are symbolic of different things to different characters. To Dickie, they are reminders of the past he has gleefully escaped and the predetermined future he narrowly avoided. He wears the rings triumphantly and almost desperately, as a way of reassuring himself that he has dominion over his life and choices. To Tom, they are dual promises of wealth (the green ring) and security in one's identity (the flashy gold signet ring). They remain, quite literally, just out of Tom's grasp, until he seizes control of his desires and takes them for his own. To Marge, the rings represent the inevitability of her loss of Dickie, and the realization that he was never hers to begin with. Though she cared for him deeply, she was unable to save him from Tom's dark pull. When she discovers Dickie's rings in Tom's possession, she buys Tom's hurriedly-assembled story of how Dickie, in a moment of despair, bequeathed him the rings—"This practically *settles* it," she says, resigning herself unquestioningly to the realization (a realization of Tom's own making) that she never knew Dickie very well at all.

MARGE'S UNDERTHINGS

The first time he visits Marge Sherwood's home in Mongibello, Tom Ripley feels threatened by "the feminine touch represented by her tomato-colored bathing suit and a bra hanging over a windowsill." Later on in the novel, after

Dickie's "disappearance," Marge reconnects with Tom in Venice. Partway through dinner, Tom "suddenly remember[s] her bra hanging over the windowsill in Mongibello," and is repulsed. The idea of her underwear hanging over a chair in his own apartment disgusts him, but he invites her to stay anyway. Throughout her stay, several more references are made to Marge's bras—she breaks a strap while out and about and, on the drunken walk home alongside Tom, she clutches at it "with one hand." Marge's unwelcome but persistent presence throughout the novel magnifies Tom's disdain for anyone but himself and Dickie—especially his disdain for women, and for the heteronormative pull that Marge represents. Her underthings are a physical symbol of her raw, unfettered affection for Dickie, and for what Tom views as the weaponization of her femininity and sexuality against Tom himself.

THE MOTORBOAT

As Tom's presence in Mongibello becomes more and more unwelcome and the emotional chasm between him and Dickie grows larger and deeper, Tom grows increasingly desperate to endear himself to Dickie, and this desperation leads him to kill Dickie on a trip to San Remo. While exploring the city, Tom suggests the two take a boat out around the port. Out on the water, Tom takes up the boat's lone oar and, with it, bludgeons Dickie to death. He then strips Dickie of his possessions, binds Dickie with rope, and uses a cement weight to drag Dickie's body to the bottom of the sea. Tom steers the bloodstained boat to a secluded shore and fills it with stones, then pushes it out "toward deeper water." However, the boat resurfaces and the authorities find it, leading to a manhunt for Dickie and questions about Tom's own whereabouts and identity. The boat, then, is a symbol for the inevitability of the truth, and the past's tendency to haunt the present. Though Tom feels little remorse for (or even emotion about) his actions, he is nonetheless dogged by the fear of having each of his lies fall down around him and thereby being discovered for what he is. The bloodstained boat's resurfacing represents the resilience of truth, even against such a worthy opponent as the talented Mr. Ripley. The boat's significance is even more magnified when taking into account the fervor with which Dickie tried to escape inheriting his father's shipbuilding business—a business which specializes in small sailing ships. Dickie's end comes in a boat, though it was his father's lifelong involvement with boats—and his attempt to foist that involvement on Dickie—that Dickie so desperately wanted to leave behind.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the W. W. Norton & Company edition of *The Talented Mr. Ripley* published in 2008.

Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ Tom's heart took a sudden leap. He put on an expression of reflection. It was a possibility. Something in him had smelled it out and leapt at it even before his brain. He wanted to leave New York. "I might," he said carefully, with the same pondering expression, as if he were even now going over the thousands of little ties that could prevent him. Tom stared at the gold signet ring with the nearly worn-away crest on Mr. Greenleaf's little finger. "I think I might."

Related Characters: Tom Ripley (speaker), Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf, Herbert Greenleaf

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 13

Explanation and Analysis

This quote situates the entire tenor and forecast of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*: it introduces a darker, more calculating side of Tom, who is both the novel's protagonist and antagonist. It cuts right through his meek exterior—the exterior he presents to Herbert Greenleaf during their first meeting at Raoul's—and puts on display a man whose every "expression" is calculated and "put on." It demonstrates that there is "something in him" that is roving, hungry, and lustful—for opportunity, for wealth, for personal gains. As he pretends to consider Herbert Greenleaf's offer—wanting to give Herbert the illusion of himself as a busy and successful man, a man with many important "ties"—he secretly surveys and covets Herbert's wealth. Receiving this introduction to Tom's true character early on demonstrates Patricia Highsmith's commitment to laying bare her most complicated and difficult character, and positioning him as an individual whose motivations, though ugly, are clear from the start. As the narrative continues to unfold and the baroque, twisting world of Tom's innermost thoughts deepens and expands, his motives can be reconstituted down to this tiny seed: his greed, deception, and talent for manufacturing appearances have been at work from the start.

Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ In a large mirror on the wall he could see himself: the upright, self-respecting young man again. He looked quickly away. He was doing the right thing, behaving the right way. Yet he had a feeling of guilt. When he had said to Mrs. Greenleaf just now, *I'll do everything I can*... Well, he had meant it. He wasn't trying to fool anybody. He felt himself beginning to sweat, and he tried to relax.

Related Characters: Tom Ripley (speaker), Emily Greenleaf

Related Themes:

Page Number: 23

Explanation and Analysis

After a night of deceiving and manipulating the Greenleafs in order to convince them that he is the right man to take on the task of retrieving their aimless son from Europe, Tom experiences a rare moment of nervousness and penitent reflection. He is attempting to present himself as an "upright, self-respecting young man" not only to the Greenleafs, but also to himself. If he can convince himself that he is worthy of the task, and that he truly will "do everything" in his power to complete it—and is not just run off to Europe with the Greenleafs' money—he will be able to live that truth. Tom's influence over himself is a major motif throughout the book. He creates stories, personas, and situations of whose truth he must convince himself in order to portray them fully. His empty identity and spongelike persona lend themselves to invention and absorption, and here we see him reassuring himself that he is not trying to "fool" anyone, even though he is clearly planning to take advantage of the Greenleafs.

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ He leaned in the corner of the elevator in an exhausted way, though he knew as soon as he hit the lobby he would fly out of the door and keep on running, running, all the way home.

Related Characters: Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 27

Explanation and Analysis

This quote embodies two major thematic arcs that will become a vital part of the novel as it progresses—appearances and escapes. After a night of pretending to be someone other than who he is (and convincing the Greenleafs that his appearance is, in fact, his lived reality), Tom is "exhausted," both physically and mentally. The only thing more overpowering than that exhaustion is his drive to escape—his need to flee his circumstances. This is to protect his carefully crafted lies and to attempt to outrun the intermittent sense of guilt and the sensation of being followed or caught up with that will assail him in these rare vulnerable moments throughout the text.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ The last four years had been for the most part a waste, there was no denying that. A series of haphazard jobs, long perilous intervals with no job at all and consequent demoralization because of having no money, and then taking up with stupid, silly people in order not to be lonely, or because they could offer him something. It was not a record to be proud of.

Related Characters: Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 39

Explanation and Analysis

Though Tom is "not proud" of his existence in New York, he is able to see it very clearly for what it is: the laying of the groundwork for all of the skills he will need to pull off this new, ultimate deception. By sussing out who can "offer" him what, Tom has honed his methods of recognizing and exploiting the wealth, privilege, and social capital of others. Able to survive "perilous" penniless times, Tom has taught himself how to withstand "demoralization" and convince himself of the idea that he deserves more—that he deserves to live, say, the way the Greenleafs live. Though his record is not one to be proud of, he nonetheless continues the patterns that created it by deceiving others as to his identity and personality, coveting wealth and luxury, and attempting to alter the appearance of his life and circumstances for the sake of escaping his social standing for a better one.

His aloofness, he knew, was causing a little comment among the passengers. He imagined [their] speculation: Is he an American! I think so, but he doesn't act like an American, does he? He's terribly 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 the future of Tom Ripley.

Related Characters: Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 41

Explanation and Analysis

Though a character with a flimsy, mutable identity, Tom Ripley is nonetheless completely preoccupied with narcissistic thoughts and plots for his own advancement. He's unsure of himself—who he is and what he feels—so instead of existing as one individual, he crafts and takes on different identities in order to feel something new. On the ship, he chooses to be "aloof" and "serious," and is every minute aware of the fun he's having convincing everyone around him that he is the serious person he's pretending to be. Tom relishes being looked at and being thought of. He wants to be as frequently present in the thoughts of others as he is in his own.

Chapter 9 Quotes

"And these—a lot of landscapes," Dickie said with a deprecatory laugh, though obviously he wanted Tom to say something complimentary about them, because obviously he was proud of them. They were all wild and hasty and monotonously similar. "My surrealist effort," Dickie said, bracing another canvas against his knee. Tom winced with almost a personal shame. It was Marge, undoubtedly, though with long snakelike hair, and worst of all two horizons in her eyes, with a miniature landscape of Mongibello's houses and mountains in one eye, and the beach in the other full of little red people. "Yes, I like that," Tom said. It gave Dickie something to do, just as it gave thousands of lousy amateur painters all over something to do. He was sorry that Dickie fell into this category as a painter, because he wanted Dickie to be much more.

Related Characters: Tom Ripley, Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf (speaker), Herbert Greenleaf, Emily Greenleaf, Marjorie "Marge" Sherwood

Related Themes:

Page Number: 58

Explanation and Analysis

At this point in the novel, Tom has ingratiated himself to Dickie by revealing that he's come to Mongibello on Dickie's father's dime. Dickie, having initially been standoffish, now welcomes Tom like a close friend, giving Tom a tour of his home, his life, his possessions, and his paintings. Dickie has moved to Italy with painting as a major priority, though his family believes that he is untalented and wasting his life—a life meant to be lived as the heir and successor to his father's shipbuilding company. When Dickie shows Tom his paintings, Tom is disheartened to find that they are just as the Greenleafs said: mediocre at best. The added slight—to Tom—of Marge's being one of Dickie's subjects inspires a kind of revulsion in Tom, and pity. He wants Dickie to be "more," because he believes that Dickie is the paragon of what a man should be—wealthy, handsome, bohemian, and aloof. Dickie's being a subpar painter does not mesh with Tom's image of Dickie—an image born of obsession, infatuation, and idolization.

Chapter 10 Quotes

Dickie walked in his slouching, downhill gait that made his bony knees jut out in front of him, a gait that Tom had unconsciously adopted, too.

Related Characters: Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf, Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 73

Explanation and Analysis

As Tom and Dickie have grown closer and then further apart in the wake of Marge's growing suspicions of Tom's motives for being in Italy, their personas have begun to blur. Tom, especially, has absorbed several of Dickie's traits. For Tom, this is no surprise—his spongelike identity and pathological need for acceptance often results in him mirroring others or creating a new persona for himself. The physical aspect, though, of Tom's obsession with Dickie, is new even for him. He has adopted Dickie's gait "unconsciously," hardly even realizing how much the time he's spent in Dickie's presence (and in thrall to him) has affected the way Tom himself moves through the world. His awareness, though, of what the gait looks like and how he has begun to mirror it, signals a nonchalance or even an excitement at the fact that he is escaping his own identity and becoming more and more like

Dickie, not just in his thoughts or habits, but in his physical appearance.

He suddenly felt that Dickie was embracing her, or at least touching her, at this minute, and partly he wanted to see it, and partly he loathed the idea of seeing it. He turned and walked back to Marge's gate. Tom stopped as Marge's window came into view: Dickie's arm was around her waist. Dickie was kissing her. Marge's face was tipped up to Dickie's, and what disgusted Tom was that he knew Dickie didn't mean it. What disgusted him was the big bulge of her behind in the peasant skirt below Dickie's arm that circled her waist. Tom turned away and ran down the steps, wanting to scream.

Related Characters: Marjorie "Marge" Sherwood, Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf, Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 74

Explanation and Analysis

Tom's intense jealousy when it comes to Marge and Dickie's relationship reaches a fever pitch in this passage, in which he follows Dickie up to Marge's house in order to spy on the two of them. He is afraid of what Marge has said to Dickie about him up to this point. He knows that she is not fond of him and, after having been discovered by Dickie while dressed in Dickie's clothes, he feels on edge as to his own relationship with Dickie, and what Dickie might think of his obsessive—verging on "queer"—behavior. There's no denying that Tom's obsession with Dickie is physical, and seeing Dickie and Marge locked in an embrace is more than Tom can bear. Tom is repulsed by what he perceives as Dickie's betrayal of him and by Dickie's using his sexuality to quell Marge's temper (since she was, prior to Dickie's arrival at her house, angry with him for including Tom in all their upcoming travel plans), but he is most repulsed byMarge's femininity itself. Tom hates Marge's interference in their relationship and he is threatened that her female-ness is appealing to Dickie, even though Tom views her as an unattractive woman. Just as Tom wanted Dickie to be a better painter, he is disheartened to realize that Dickie could find attractive a woman such as Marge—a woman Tom believes to be noisome, homely, and meddling. Immediately after having confirmed his worst fears as to the nature of Dickie and Marge's friendship, Tom's impulse is, as it was at the Greenleafs' Park Avenue home, to flee—to escape, to "run" as fast as he can.

Chapter 11 Quotes

You were supposed to see the soul through the eyes, to see love through the eyes, the one place you could look at another human being and see what really went on inside, and in Dickie's eyes Tom saw nothing more now than he would have seen if he had looked at the hard, bloodless surface of a mirror. It was as if Dickie had been suddenly snatched away from him. They were not friends. They didn't know each other.

Related Characters: Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf, Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

As Tom feels Dickie slipping further and further away from him, he realizes in one horrific moment that he and Dickie don't really know each other at all—they never have, and they never will. Though Tom has worked tirelessly to convince Dickie that he is a worthy companion—funny, game, cultured, and interesting—his obsession with Dickie has created a rabid quality that Dickie is unable to ignore. After the two of them have words about Dickie's lack of sense of adventure and Tom's reckless endangerment of their lives by engaging with a conman and a smuggler, it becomes clear to Tom that their relationship is not what he thought it was, and the two of them are not on equal footing.

It's striking that Tom comes to this realization through looking into Dickie's eyes and thinking he sees "nothing more" than he'd see looking into his own reflection. Tom has, from his first encounter with Dickie, built him up to be an icon, a figure of wealth, status, and charm to whose level Tom has aspired. After realizing, though, that Dickie is only human—and perhaps not even a very good or interesting person—Tom sees that Dickie not "more" than he is, and that his sponging up of Dickie's habits, tastes, and affectations has not, perhaps, served to better him in the ways he thought it might.

Chapter 12 Quotes

Tom sat opposite [Dickie], staring at his hands with the green ring and the gold signet ring. A crazy emotion of hate, of affection, of impatience and frustration was swelling in him. He wanted to kill Dickie. It was not the first time he had thought of it. He had failed with Dickie, in every way. He hated Dickie. He had offered Dickie friendship, companionship, everything he had to offer, and Dickie had replied with ingratitude and now hostility. If he killed him on this trip, he could simply say that some accident had happened. He could—He had just thought of something brilliant: he could become Dickie Greenleaf. The danger of it, even the inevitable temporariness of it, only made him more enthusiastic. He began to think of how.

Related Characters: Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf, Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 95

Explanation and Analysis

Tom's insecurity in his own identity and his anger and disappointment with Dickie both reach a fever pitch at this point in the novel, as the two men travel to San Remo on a short getaway. Tom had originally been vying for a long trip to Paris but Dickie, put off by Tom's odd behavior and Marge's warnings that Tom might be "queer," shortens the trip and suggests San Remo, a destination within Italy's borders. Tom stews angrily as their train carries them toward the Riviera town. He wants desperately to be done with Dickie, and would rather kill him than live with the shame of having "failed" in winning his friendship and love. Tom's entitlement, the defining characteristic of his own identity, creeps in again as he mulls over the injustice of the discrepancy between his behavior toward Dickie and Dickie's behavior toward him. This passage depicts Tom's realization that he wants more than revenge—he wants the ultimate triumph over Dickie, which is inhabiting his very life. Tom is allured by danger, by wealth, and by the opportunity to remake himself in a new image; killing Dickie offers the advantages of all three. This moment represents a major change for Tom, who until now has subsisted on low-level cons and deception. Tom actively wants to become a criminal, to commit an evil act—he is descending even further into sociopathy and, as he does, Highsmith is pushing the boundaries of how "bad" she can make her protagonist while still encouraging her readers to root for his success.

Chapter 14 Quotes

This was the clean slate he had thought about on the boat coming over from America. This was the real annihilation of his past and of himself, Tom Ripley, who was made up of that past, and his rebirth as a completely new person... He felt as he had on the ship, only more intensely, full of goodwill, a gentleman, with nothing in his past to blemish his character.

Related Characters: Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf, Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 121-122

Explanation and Analysis

In the wake of Dickie's murder, Tom has sunk into his new identity as Dickie and flourished within it. He has longed since the novel's start for a "clean slate," and recently, since meeting Dickie, he has begun to fantasize about the "annihilation" of Tom Ripley—he views his old self as a character, and a drab, uninteresting, burdensome one at that. Tom's past was full of embarrassing degradations—Aunt Dottie's bullying, Marc Priminger's predatory and controlling nature, Bob Delancey's gauche and raucous social circle—that now seem to be distant dreams unable to "blemish" his new life.

Tom's speedy transition, in many ways the climactic core of the book, is heavily loaded with the novel's most prominent themes—abandoning identity in favor of imitation, delving into a world of luxury and excess, creating false appearances to mask a pitiful or dangerous reality, and seeking escape in the form of a new life, new friends, and a new setting. This passage represents, in many ways, the peak of Tom's life as "Dickie." He is thrilled to find that he can pass for the man, and has not yet encountered the entanglements—Freddie Miles, questioning of his forgeries, and the discovery of the sunken motorboat—that will indeed serve to "blemish" Dickie's character.

Chapter 17 Quotes

Tom saw Dickie smiling at him, dressed in the corduroy suit that he had worn in San Remo. The suit was soaking wet, the tie a dripping string. Dickie bent over him, shaking him. "I swam!" he said. "Tom, wake up! I'm all right! I swam! I'm alive!" Tom squirmed away from his touch. He heard Dickie laugh at him, Dickie's happy, deep laugh. "*Tom!*" The timbre of the voice was deeper, richer, *better* than Tom had even been able to make it in his imitations. "*I swam!*" Dickie's voice shouted, ringing and ringing in Tom's ears as if he heard it through a long tunnel.

Related Characters: Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf, Tom Ripley (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 156

Explanation and Analysis

As Tom's tenuous façade begins to come down following his brutal murder of Freddie Miles, he is plagued by a vision of Dickie, alive but drenched, manic, and vaguely terrifying, which symbolizes Tom's fear of having his increasingly drastic and dangerous actions catch up with him at last. What arguably frightens Tom most about the vision is the realization that he will never be able to "make" himself into Dickie—his imitations will always be just pale specters of the real Dickie Greenleaf. This fear will unconsciously motivate Tom to seek more, to dive deeper, and to continue his streak of recklessness in pursuit of the complete usurpation of Dickie's identity.

Chapter 19 Quotes

What had he said about risks? Risks were what made the whole thing fun. [And] anticipation! It occurred to him that his anticipation was more pleasant to him than his experiencing. Was it always going to be like that? When he spent evenings alone, handling Dickie's possessions, simply looking at his rings on his own fingers, or his woolen ties, or his black alligator wallet, was that experiencing or anticipation?

Related Characters: Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf, Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 169

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Tom delves into the machinations of his motivations, revealing his attraction to risk and anticipation—feelings that fill him with a sensation of potential. Whether that potential is for danger and calamity or fulfillment and comfort is beside the point—what's attractive to Tom is the existence in an in-between state, in a moment of waiting for the next thing to happen. The line between experiencing something and waiting to experience it has become blurred for Tom, and he can no longer clearly discern whether the fruits of his deeds fulfill him. He has longed for a new identity, for wealth, and for escape, but now that he has those things, he finds himself seeking out risk and that elusive feeling of being on the precipice of something.

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. The idea of going to Greece, trudging over the Acropolis as Tom Ripley, American tourist, held no charm for him at all. He would as soon not go.Tears came in his eyes as he stared up at the cathedral, and then he turned away and began to walk down a new street.

Related Characters: Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf, Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 169-170

Explanation and Analysis

Tom loathes himself—he loathes his personality, his appearance, and his poverty. Through Dickie, he can experience the world as a person he admires, and he can almost convince himself that appearing to be Dickie equates to a reality in which he actually is Dickie. The shattering of that illusion is almost more than Tom can bear, and the realization that he can never escape himself brings him to tears. This passage also alludes to a different level of Tom's entitlement. Not only does he feel entitled to the wealth and luxury that he has neither earned nor inherited, but he also feels entitled to a new persona—Dickie's persona. His petty and childish sulking at the idea of having to go to Greece as himself rather than as Dickie shows the extent of his pathology.

Chapter 20 Quotes

He was lonely. He had imagined himself acquiring a bright new circle of friends with whom he would start a new life with new attitudes, standards, and habits that would be far better and cleverer than those 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. He altered his behavior slightly, to accord with the role of a more detached observer of life. There was a faint air of 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 some kind of emotional disaster, and was trying to recuperate by visiting some of the most beautiful places on the earth.

Related Characters: Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 174

Explanation and Analysis

As Tom ruminates on the consequences of his actions—namely on the desolate future of the lonely life he's destined to lead—it's difficult to discern whether the "faint air of sadness" he takes on is genuine or an affectation. It seems to be the latter—he "enjoys change," constantly seeks to imitate new identities, and longs for an escape from the claustrophobic feeling of loneliness he has recently begun to encounter. However, there's a sense, too, in which the aura of sadness he's cultivating is probably true. Though it was all in his head, he has suffered an unhappy love affair that became an emotional disaster, and he is trying to find ways to recuperate. Obviously, he doesn't want people to be able to read his criminality in his appearance, but there's likely a way in which believing that people can intuit some of his sadness makes him feel cared about, or makes him feel like the kind of person he wishes to be.

As on the ship coming over from America (and on his journey to Paris in disguise as Dickie), he focuses the entirety of his thoughts on how others must see him, delighting in speculating about their perceptions and the drama, mystery, and romance of how he might appear. At least the third instance of Tom indulging this compulsion in the novel, this passage highlights his obsessive need to reinvent, to escape, and to amass, as well as the shakiness of his own identity and his resultant need to bolster his confidence through the eyes of those around him.

Chapter 23 Quotes

Were [the authorities] going to pounce on him soon with every bit of evidence they needed? It gave Tom the feeling that he was being followed. Tom did not know who would attack him, if he were attacked. He did not imagine police, necessarily. He was afraid of nameless, formless things that haunted his brain like the Furies.

Related Characters: Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 203

Explanation and Analysis

The "nameless, formless Furies" that haunt Tom's thoughts might be assumed to be some kind of manifestation of guilt or a blemished conscience. However, at this point in the text, it has become clear that Tom's "conscience" does not operate normally. A self-obsessed narcissist, hoarder, imitator, and escape artist, Tom has very few qualms with bulldozing the comforts, wishes, and lives of those around him in order to look out for himself. He rarely, if ever, experiences guilt in the traditional sense—his regrets involve not having been able to ensnare Dickie deeply enough while he was alive, not yet having enough of Dickie's possessions after arranging and executing his murder, and not having been able to secure vengeance against those who he feels have wronged him. The "Furies," then, could represent Tom's general sense of insecurity in his own safety, the fear that his possessions (hard-earned in his view) could be taken from him, and the exposition of the crimes he has committed and the shameful lengths he has gone to cover them up. It is not the authorities that Tom fears; it is the scrutiny and opinions of his acquaintances, of the outspoken, answer-hungry European press, and of the public that follows that press—anyone at all who might pass judgement on Tom Ripley.

Chapter 26 Quotes

He loved possessions. They gave a man self-respect. Not ostentation but quality, and the love that cherished the quality. Possessions reminded him that he existed, and made him enjoy his existence. It was as simple as that. And wasn't that worth something? He existed.

Related Characters: Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 234

Explanation and Analysis

For someone whose identity is as shallow and porous as Tom's is, it follows that he would need something to "remind him that he exists." Possessions—namely, Dickie's possessions—fill that gap and allow him to have a tactile, sensory experience of the wealth he has amassed, as well as the identity he has assumed. Whether Tom's "existence" is his own or Dickie's doesn't quite matter as much when he is surrounded by beautiful clothes and objects—their presence alone brings him comfort and allows him to distract himself with his obsession with luxury, excess, and gathering the accoutrements that make up an identity.

> His stories were good because he imagined them intensely, so intensely that he came to believe them.

Related Characters: Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 237

Explanation and Analysis

Tom has many skills, but perhaps his greatest is the ability to convince himself of a reality other than the one he lives in. A gifted forger and imitator, Tom combines and extends those proclivities into the ability to spin wild stories that help him cover up the tracks of the crimes—most of all, from himself. Tom's lies have helped to hide his murders of Dickie and of Freddie Miles and his own disappearance in the wake of both murders. After Dickie's rings are discovered in his possession, he must invent a new story—the moment in which Dickie "gave him" the rings for safekeeping. Tom knows that each story he tells in order to convince his acquaintances and the authorities of his innocence must be impossible to be prove incorrect when fact-checked. He also knows that his lies must come from a place of emotion in order to appear real. Tom's success or failure in distorting the appearance of his life requires a complete commitment, and, as he spins and "imagines" these stories, he allows himself to give into the false realities of his own creation.

Chapter 29 Quotes

> In a way it was asking for trouble, Tom thought. But that was the mood he was in. The very chanciness of trying for all of Dickie's money, the peril of it, was irresistible to him.

Related Characters: Herbert Greenleaf, Richard "Dickie" Greenleaf, Tom Ripley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 259

Explanation and Analysis

As the novel has progressed, Tom's recklessness with his own life and the lives of others has deepened and spread. Tom's "moods" have seen him betray Herbert Greenleaf, implore Dickie to take part in a drug-smuggling scheme, commit two grisly murders, steal valuable land and real estate, brazenly navigate one of the most populous metropolitan centers in Europe under a stolen identity, and tell innumerable twisting, compounding lies to his acquaintances and the authorities alike. All of this is done in the name of risks and thrills—the major motivators for Tom apart from escape, self-loathing, and greed. Tom is excited about the opportunity to acquire more wealth, to be sure, but the victory of acquiring "all" of it is so appealing to him because it sates, however briefly, his obsessive nature. Sure, it'll be nice to have a vast fortune—but the object of Tom's desire is really the symbolic triumph that total domination over Dickie's life and assets represents: his ability to completely usurp all that Dickie was.

Chapter 30 Quotes

> He saw four motionless figures standing on the imaginary pier, the figures of Cretan policemen waiting for him, patiently waiting with folded arms. He grew suddenly tense and his vision vanished. Was he going to see policemen waiting for him on every pier that he ever approached? In Alexandria? Istanbul? Bombay? Rio? No use thinking about that. He pulled his shoulders back. No use spoiling his trip worrying about imaginary policemen. Even if there were policemen on the pier, it wouldn't necessarily mean—
>
> "A donda, a donda?" the taxi driver was saying, trying to speak Italian for him.
>
> "To a hotel, please," Tom said. "Il meglio albergo. Il meglio, il meglio!"

Related Characters: Tom Ripley (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 271

Explanation and Analysis

Over the course of the novel, Tom Ripley has murdered

twice. He has stolen identities, possessions, wealth, and capital—monetary and social. He has deceived good people, he has wrecked familial, friendly, and romantic relationships, and he has done it all in the name of his own entitlement. Miraculously, and despite intense scrutiny from the authorities and from Dickie's friends, family, and acquaintances, Tom has, for all intents and purposes, gotten away with everything. In the last passage of the novel, as Tom embarks on a new journey through Greece, he wonders if he will forever be plagued by his own fear of captures—by the "Furies" that have haunted him since people began looking for Dickie. Tom's obsessive nature has, in the wake of the prying open of his many insidious crimes, caused him to become inundated by fear, rather than living unburdened as a relatively conscience-less person. In this passage, he wonders if the moments of joy in his life as he travels the world will be shadowed by the threat of capture, but his becoming lost on this tangent is interrupted by his taxi driver. Tom abandons his spiraling thoughts and instructs the driver, in Italian, to take him to the best hotel in town—displaying his escape into the cushion of luxury and excess, and his maintenance of the appearance—even to himself—that his life is one free from guilt or hardship. Tom Ripley, in other words, hasn't changed.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

Tom Ripley hurriedly exits a bar called the Green Cage on Park Avenue, aware that he is being followed by a man in a suit. Nervous that he is about to be caught for committing an unnamed crime, Tom ducks into another bar, Raoul's, and orders a drink.

From the novel's first sentence, we have a clear portrait of the slippery Tom Ripley: nervous, guilty, eager to hide and disguise himself. The "Green Cage" also evokes the suffocation of wealth that Tom will encounter.

Tom's pursuer enters the bar and approaches him. He introduces himself as Herbert Greenleaf, and explains that he recognizes Tom as a friend of his son, Richard Greenleaf, known by everyone as "Dickie." Tom remembers Dickie, with whom he was once casually acquainted and whose Park Avenue apartment he visited once or twice, as "a tall blond fellow with quite a bit of money."

Tom's relief to find that his pursuer is not an officer of the law but one of his wealthy acquaintances' fathers is palpable. Tom's remembrance of Dickie includes no details of his personality—only that he is wealthy. From the start, Tom's attraction to wealth and luxury is apparent.

Tom and Herbert move to a table, where Herbert asks whether Tom and Dickie are still in touch, and explains that Dickie has run away to Italy to paint. Herbert desperately wants Dickie to return home—Dickie's mother, Emily, is ill, and Herbert wants Dickie to enter the family shipbuilding business. He offers to "send Tom over" to convince Dickie to return. Herbert, grateful that Tom is "the first of Dickie's friends who's been willing to listen" to him, tells Tom that his expenses will be covered, and that he hopes Tom will "succeed where the rest of us have failed." Tom, though aware that Herbert is overestimating his and Dickie's closeness, is excited by the prospect, and allows Herbert to buy him another drink.

From their first meeting, Tom allows Herbert to treat him, and takes advantage of Herbert's desperation. This behavior will become cyclical as the novel progresses, with the relationship between Tom and Herbert serving as one of the most egregious examples of Tom's voracity, greed, and entitlement deployed against another human being.

CHAPTER 2

After drinks with Herbert, Tom returns home to his "dingy" brownstone apartment, where he shares a dirty, small room with a man named Bob Delancey. "The main advantage" of the place according to Tom is his ability to receive mail there addressed to George McAplin—an alias he uses in order to conduct a low-level con in which he poses either over the telephone or in written correspondence as an IRS official and collects checks for additional tax money from the elderly. Though he has collected nearly two thousand dollars in checks, he cannot cash them, since they're made out to the Internal Revenue Service. Tom plans to destroy the checks before he leaves for Europe. In the morning, Tom excitedly dresses and heads off to Radio City to obtain a passport.

The filth and squalor Tom lives in spur him even deeper into his entitlement—he feels he deserves better than what he has, and, as his current scheme to escape his circumstances is failing, he jumps eagerly at the opportunity to mooch off of the wealthy and generous Greenleafs. Tom's low-level tax fraud scam is pitiful in that it's so wildly unsuccessful, but admirable in that readers are given a sense of his potential as a conman—he has been carefully honing his gifts for vocal imitation and spinning intricate lies.

CHAPTER 3

That night, Tom arrives at the Greenleafs' Park Avenue apartment for dinner. He's received warmly by Herbert and his ill wife Emily. During the sumptuous dinner, Tom lies extensively to the Greenleafs about both his past and his present, claiming to work at an advertising firm and to have attended Princeton.

Tom is eager to impress the Greenleafs both because he wants their financial support and because he desires their approval. He wants very much to be an impressive person, and tries out a new version of himself on Herbert and Emily.

After the meal, Herbert and Emily show Tom a photo album full of pictures of Dickie—one picture, taken in Italy, features an American woman named Marge Sherwood. Emily becomes emotional, and Tom promises to do "everything he can to make Dickie come back." Emily goes off to bed, and Tom and Herbert enjoy a brandy. Herbert confesses that Emily has leukemia and "may not live a year." He offers Tom six hundred dollars in traveler's checks plus a round trip ticket, and offers to show Tom his company's shipyards before Tom departs.

Though Tom bears witness to Emily's emotional and physical vulnerability, he remains fixed on the financial gains that he stands to make through this new scheme. Tom hungrily accepts Herbert's offer of money and access to the inner workings of his company.

As the men continue drinking, Tom becomes "increasingly close-mouthed and sour" and develops an intense desire to leave the apartment, though he stays in order to continue ingratiating himself to Herbert. Eventually, though, Tom becomes overwhelmed, and he excuses himself. In the mirror in the building's elevator, Tom sees a "pained, frightened expression" on his own face, and he knows that "as soon as he hits the lobby he will fly out of the door and keep on running, running all the way home."

This passage contains one of just a few moments of vulnerability, fright, or regret that Tom experiences throughout the novel. Though usually remorseless and numb, Tom here becomes overwhelmed in Herbert's presence and displays his main defense mechanism: quick and silent escape.

CHAPTER 4

During his last few days in New York, Tom grows anxious as he ties up his loose ends. He has no family business to attend to, as his parents drowned in Boston Harbor. As a result of that tragedy, Tom "hates water." Tom tells his roommate, Bob Delancey, that he'll be moving, but does not tell him where. He visits his former residence, a house owned by a vain, shady man named Marc Priminger, "to pick up a couple of things," but does not tell Marc of his plans either. "The only friend he feels like telling" is a woman named Cleo Dobelle, a painter who lives "in her own suite of rooms" in her parents' home. He tells her about his visit to the Greenleaf shipyard, and his return to the Greenleafs' apartment for another dinner—at which Herbert "had presented him with a wristwatch." Tom tells Cleo proudly that Herbert has "adopted him like a son."

Tom's hatred of water is not significant enough to deter him from taking the trip, but it's nonetheless symbolic of his fear of his own past. Tom seems to dislike almost everyone in New York except for Cleo, and he tells only her of the once-in-a-lifetime offer that's been given to him. He exaggerates not a small amount regarding Hebert's having "adopted him like a son," but it's unclear whether he truly believes this fact or whether he simply wants to impress Cleo.

The following day, Tom picks up several things from Brooks Brothers that he's been instructed to take to Dickie. He chooses the things that he thinks Dickie will most like, and charges them to the Greenleafs' account.

Tom is already trying to align himself with Dickie's thoughts and preferences. He is freely spending the Greenleafs' money before he's even left the States.

CHAPTER 5

Though Tom has told Bob Delancey that he doesn't want to be seen off, when he arrives at the ship that will take him to Europe, he finds Bob and several of Bob's friends drinking and reveling raucously inside his cabin. Tom is annoyed and distressed and leaves to wander the ship; soon, though, visitors are called ashore, and when Tom returns to his cabin, it has been neatened and cleaned. There is a fruit basket from Emily and Herbert waiting inside, and Tom begins to sob at the sight of it.

The final obstacle between Tom's life in New York and his journey abroad comes in the form of his circle of acquaintances, whom he sees as obnoxious. When they finally leave him and he receives the fruit basket from the Greenleafs, he is so overwhelmed by the joy and potential of his new life that he experiences another rare moment of vulnerability.

CHAPTER 6

On the ship, Tom begins to play the "role of a serious young man with a serious job ahead of him." He does not attempt to socialize with the other passengers, and instead he hones his identity as "a young man with a private income, not long out of Princeton, perhaps." Tom is excited to start a new life, and he envisions, even if his mission to bring Dickie home fails, staying on in Europe.

Tom is roleplaying a new "character," honing his ability to shapeshift and impersonate any person, or kind of person, he wants to. Tom has not even begun to complete his "mission," but already he is calculating how he can benefit from it without actually having to accomplish it.

Tom writes letters to the Greenleafs, amusing himself by adding imagined accounts of Dickie's life in Europe. He does not send these fanciful letters, which are full of somewhat lurid observations of Marge and Dickie's relationship. He writes and sends a letter to his Aunt Dottie, "cutting himself off from her." He is eager for distance from her snide letters, pitiful checks, and reminders of how cruel she was to him as a child—calling him a "sissy" and a burden.

Without even knowing Dickie and Marge, Tom is wary and jealous of their relationship. His cutting ties with his Aunt Dottie reflects his desire to rid himself of his former life and of his memories of her having belittled and teased him in regards to his appearance and demeanor—an appearance and demeanor he hopes to cast off.

Tom ruminates on the mistakes he's made in the last few years in New York—never sticking to anything, stealing when he felt "the world owed him"— but he delights in his new identity as a mysterious and lonely figure on the ship, the subject of excited "speculation" from other passengers. He thinks the others must think that he has something "important on his mind," and he decides that, in fact, he does: "the present and future of Tom Ripley."

Tom is self-aware enough to process his own sense of entitlement, but he regrets it only marginally and is unable to focus on anything but the future. His obsession with the creation of a new identity manifests in his narcissistic thought pattern regarding what the other passengers must think of him—his every thought is of himself.

CHAPTER 7

Tom takes a train through France and into Italy. He spends the night at a fine hotel in Naples and treats himself to a luxurious dinner, grateful that Herbert Greenleaf is footing his bills.

Immediately after setting foot in Europe, Tom begins living the life of luxury he's always felt he deserved—even if he's done nothing yet to earn it.

The following morning, Tom takes a bus to Mongibello. He asks some locals to point him in the direction of Dickie's house, and they indicate that Dickie is at the beach. Tom purchases a bathing suit and heads to the water, where he spots Dickie and Marge. Tom introduces himself, but Dickie does not remember him from America.

Tom's first meeting with Dickie reveals the fact that Dickie looms much larger in Tom's mind than Tom does in his—from the start they are on uneven footing, with Tom feeling a need to make an impression upon Dickie.

After a swim, Dickie invites Tom up to his house for lunch—Marge joins them. Tom and Dickie discuss Dickie's parents, and Marge points out her house and Dickie's boat. Tom studies **Dickie's rings** while the three of them eat spaghetti. Dickie is in a "foul mood," upset by his father's having sent an emissary to check up on him, and, right after the meal is finished, he recommends a nearby hotel. Tom excuses himself, and "neither Marge nor Dickie urges him to stay." Dickie shows Tom out, and closes the iron gate to his home.

Tom feels included for a brief time during lunch with Dickie and Marge, but he soon picks up on Dickie's moodiness and how it is directly related to Tom's own arrival. The clang of the iron gate as it shuts Tom out represents a seemingly impenetrable barrier between his life and the life that Dickie has fled to Europe to live out in peace.

CHAPTER 8

From his hotel room, Tom, sick with an upset stomach, observes Dickie and Marge as they make their way down a nearby street. Tom "curses himself for being heavy-handed," and decides to wait a few days before resuming contact and attempting to "make Dickie like him," though he wants that "more than anything else in the world."

Tom's desperate need for Dickie to like him intensifies in tandem with his feeling of being trapped in his hotel room. Watching Dickie and Marge together is already almost more than Tom can bear, and it sets a fire within him.

CHAPTER 9

After three days alone and sick in the hotel, Tom goes down to the beach to find Dickie. After a quick dip, Tom invites Dickie to his hotel, in order to give him the Brooks Brothers items he picked up on behalf of Dickie's parents. Dickie agrees, and the two head back to the hotel and up to Tom's room. Dickie collects his things, and Tom tells him that Herbert is "very concerned" about him. Dickie explains that he's happy in Italy, and has no intentions of returning to America.

Tom concocts a plan in order to ingratiate himself to Dickie. Part of him hopes that just spending time together will do the trick, but there's no denying that Tom believes that giving Dickie a physical gift—the luxurious Brooks Brothers clothes—will bring them closer together. Tom's reverence for material goods is exposed here.

Sensing that Dickie has grown colder and is about to leave forever, Tom confesses that Herbert sent him over "especially" to ask him to come home. When Dickie realizes that his father has paid Tom's way, he is intrigued and amused by his father's desperation. Tom and Dickie have a drink in the hotel bar and toast Herbert.

Dickie, in a cruel show of contempt for his parents' lives and wishes, is made absolutely giddy by the fact that Herbert has gone to such desperate lengths to secure his return. This is finally the thing that brings him closer to Tom—their shared ridicule of Herbert.

Dickie invites Tom to lunch, but first the two stop by Marge's house to see if she is home—her home is "sloppy" with a "messy" garden out front, and her red **bathing suit and a bra** are hanging out of a windowsill. Marge greets the two men, and Dickie urges Tom to tell Marge about Herbert's proposition; Tom tells the story in great detail to both Marge and Dickie's amusement, and can feel "how high his stock is shooting up" with both of them.

Tom sees Marge's house as a dirty and feminine space. He is unsettled and repelled time and time again throughout the novel by her femininity and any display of vulnerability or honesty she makes. Nevertheless, Tom is thrilled by his "rising stock" in both Dickie and Marge's eyes.

The three head to Dickie's home for lunch, and Tom describes his many talents—for forgery, figures, and impersonating "practically anybody." Dickie shows Tom his paintings, and Tom notes that they are not very good—he is disappointed, because he wants Dickie "to be much more." Dickie gives Tom a tour of the rest of the house, and notes that there is "no sign of Marge anywhere, least of all in Dickie's bedroom."

Tom and Dickie compare talents, and it is clear that Tom is the more skilled of the two—however, he's disappointed to realize it, since he wants Dickie to be exquisite and unsurpassable. Tom sees Dickie almost as an extension of himself already, or even a better version of himself, so it's only through Dickie being amazing that Tom can gain respect for himself.

Tom suggests he and Dickie go to Naples. Dickie tells him that he and Marge are planning to go on Saturday evening, but Tom, "hoping to avoid Marge in the excursion," suggests a daytime or weekday trip, and Dickie agrees to leave the following day. Tom asks if Marge is a Catholic, and Dickie tells him that she converted for an "Italian she had a mad crush on." Tom tells Dickie that he had supposed that Marge was in love with him; Dickie tells Tom not to be "silly." They return to the terrace and eat lunch, then Tom invites Marge and Dickie for dinner at his hotel. Dickie invites Tom to move into his house, and Tom agrees. He tells Dickie that there is still five hundred dollars of Herbert's money left, and he suggests they "have a little fun on it."

In this passage, the intricacies of Tom, Dickie, and Marge's peculiar triangle begin to emerge. Tom believes that Marge is in love with Dickie, but doesn't necessarily believe Dickie reciprocates—in fact, he hopes that Dickie doesn't. Dickie's denial of the entire affair emboldens and excites Tom, and, as the two make the decision to move in together, Tom's sense of being buoyed and buffeted by Dickie's possessions, attentions, and family money reaches a peak.

The next morning, Tom moves in. After his belongings are settled in Dickie's house, the two of them head for the bus to Naples. On the way, they run into another American, a redhead in a "loud sports shirt." His name is Freddie Miles, and Tom thinks he is "hideous." Freddie invites Dickie to a skiing trip in Cortina in December, then Dickie bids him goodbye. Dickie and Tom board the bus to Naples and, once there, they people-watch at a pizzeria. After a while, Dickie suggests they go to Rome, and they hitch a ride with an Italian acquaintance of Dickie's. Once there, the men visit a music hall, take a ride through the city, and eat and drink to excess. Dickie calls Tom "Mr. Greenleaf," making Tom feel "weird," and the two drunkenly help a woman home in a taxi. Tom remarks that if Marge were with them, they "wouldn't be seeing half of Rome." Dickie agrees enthusiastically, and puts his arm around Tom's shoulder.

Tom's inherent dislike of anyone who shows a familiarity with Dickie becomes clear when he reacts negatively to Freddie Miles almost immediately. This aspect of Tom's personality is emphasized when, in the midst of a fun night out in Rome, Marge is at the forefront of Tom's imagination in a negative way—he can only think how badly she'd stand in the way of his and Dickie's growing closer. And the two men are growing closer: Dickie's calling Tom "Mr. Greenleaf" heralds a breaking down of boundaries between the two and a blurring of the lines that define their personalities—all due to Tom's obsession with Dickie.

The next day, Tom and Dickie return to Mongibello. Marge is "annoyed" with Dickie for staying out without telling her. Tom keeps his mouth shut, happy to "let Marge imagine what she pleased." He observes that Marge is jealous of him for forming "a closer bond with Dickie because he was another man…a closer bond than she could ever have with Dickie." When Dickie leaves the two of them alone, Marge tells Tom about her writing—she is working on a book about Mongibello. Marge's pronunciation and provinciality irk Tom, but he tries to be pleasant to her nonetheless, feeling "he can afford to be."

Tom actually wants for Marge to think that something is afoot between him and Dickie. Though he'll later insist that he "isn't queer" and that he prefers women, there's no doubt that he longs for Marge to think that he and Dickie might be growing closer than close, because it would mean that Dickie accepts and loves him.

CHAPTER 10

Tom has been with Dickie "every moment since he moved into Dickie's house." Over the course of the few days after the trip to Rome, Marge makes herself scarce, and is "cool" toward both Tom and Dickie when they see her at the beach. Tom realizes that Marge is "much fonder" of Dickie than he is of her. Tom also feels that Dickie is enjoying his company, and that he's doing a good job of keeping Dickie "amused." Tom studies Italian with a local young man named Fausto, writes to Herbert with falsely encouraging news, and lazes about on the beach. Tom and Dickie make vague plans for traveling Europe together over the next several months, and though Tom attempts to exclude Marge, Dickie mentions their plans to her. Tom notices that Dickie occasionally takes Marge's hand and is making an effort to be "attentive."

The halcyon days of Tom's stay in Mongibello are marked by his and Dickie's intense enjoyment of the present and their looking toward the future—a future in which each figures in the other's life and in which the luxury and ease that defines Dickie's life goes on for both of them. This excites Tom, but Dickie's fear of excluding Marge soon begins to cloud that excitement. Tom does not want Marge to be the recipient of any of Dickie's affections, and the physical aspect of his and Marge's relationship puts Tom on high alert. It is the one thing that he and Dickie cannot share.

Dickie goes up to Marge's house, hoping to reassure her and to invite her to Cortina. Tom follows him in secret; he has pictured Dickie embracing Marge, and he simultaneously wants to see it and "loathes the idea" of seeing it. When Tom arrives at the house, he can see Dickie kissing Marge through the window, and it disgusts him. He runs all the way home to Dickie's, where he throws some of Dickie's art supplies out the window. He then goes into Dickie's room and tries on Dickie's clothes. Dressed head-to-toe as Dickie, Tom imitates Dickie's voice and enacts a scene of murdering Marge by strangling her until she goes limp. "You were interfering between Tom and me," he tells her imaginary corpse. "No, not that! But there is a bond between us!" Tom imagines Marge and Dickie making love, then dons one of Dickie's hats. Right at that moment, Dickie walks into the room.

Tom's worst fears are confirmed when he comes upon Marge and Dickie embracing. Marge's "disgusting" femininity combined with what Tom perceives as her encroachment on his relationship with Dickie drives him to the very edge of madness, forcing him to retreat into a fantasy of himself, as Dickie, murdering her. Though as he enacts the fantasy, he denies his attraction to Dickie within it, the moment is bizarre and tinged with desire to be like Dickie, to be with Dickie, and to abandon his own self in order to carry out his deepest feelings as Dickie.

Although in the past few weeks Dickie has welcomingly lent Tom his clothes, he asks Tom to "get out" of his outfit. Tom tries to act casual, asking Dickie if he's made up with Marge. Dickie insists that he and Marge are "fine," and then tells Tom "clearly" that he is "not queer." Dickie tells Tom that Marge thinks Tom is queer because of how Tom acts. Tom insists that he isn't, as does Dickie, and Tom then asks Dickie if he is in love with Marge. Dickie tells Tom he is not, but accuses Tom of being "obvious" about his dislike for Marge, and making her feel bad.

Dickie's discovery of Tom dressed head to toe in his clothing spooks him, to say the least. It forces him to confront Tom about his sexuality, sharing with Tom that his suspicions are supported by—perhaps even engendered by—Marge. When Tom denies his "queerness," Dickie vehemently denies his as well but, unable to let the issue go, notes that Tom seems to be taking something out on Marge.

Tom attempts to reassure himself of Dickie's affections while Dickie spends the afternoon painting. By five o' clock Tom feels that things are back to "normal," and he and Dickie spend time conversing in Italian with Fausto. Tom hopes that, with hard work, he can make his Italian "as good as Dickie's."

Tom's anxiety after his confrontation with Dickie is palpable, but the time the two share practicing Italian reaffirms Tom's hope that he and Dickie remain on the same page, and that he is on track to become more like Dickie every day.

CHAPTER 11

Tom approaches Dickie with an offer to travel to Paris "in a coffin." An Italian man has offered to pay them each a hundred thousand lire to conspire in the stunt, which both Tom and Dickie assume is related to transporting drugs across the border. Dickie is reticent, leading Tom to question where Dickie's "spirit" has gone. Dickie agrees to go speak to the Italian man offering the trip, and they head down to the café. After the Italian man decides that Dickie is not right for the job, Tom notices Dickie eyeing the man judgingly. Tom becomes upset, and accuses Dickie of ruining his fun. Dickie tells Tom that he's under no obligation to "do what I do," and Tom sees "nothing more in Dickie's eyes that he would have seen if he had looked at the hard, bloodless surface of a mirror." He realizes that he and Dickie are not friends; they hardly even know each other. Dickie asks Tom if he is okay, and Tom laughs off his despair.

Tom presents Dickie with a far-fetched, ridiculous opportunity to try to amuse him—it is what he feels he can offer Dickie. Dickie, however, in the wake of his confrontation with Tom, is on the defensive, and he rejects Tom's idea and criticizes Tom's propensity to follow Dickie around and imitate him. Tom's realization that he still is no more important to Dickie than he was on the day he first arrived, when Dickie could not remember him, shakes him to his core. This is an important moment in Tom's life, because it catalyzes his desperation to keep Dickie close at all costs.

Tom heads home while Dickie goes off to visit Marge. On the way back to the house, Tom stops and retrieves a letter from the post office—it is a letter from Herbert, writing to say that he has concluded that Tom's mission has been unsuccessful, as Dickie seems to be, from his letters, "more determined than ever to stay where he is." Tom realizes that his funds are soon to run out, and he becomes paranoid as to what Dickie and Marge's conversations about him might be. Back at the house, Tom tries to sell Dickie on the idea of a Paris trip of their own, but Dickie says he's "not in the mood." As a compromise, Tom suggests San Remo, and Dickie agrees. While fixing himself a drink, Tom sees that Dickie has purchased a refrigerator, and he realizes that Dickie is committed to staying in Mongibello with Marge rather than traveling or moving across Europe with him. Hurt and isolated, he decides to leave Mongibello before Christmas.

The news from Herbert, on the heels of Dickie's coldness, creates in Tom a new kind of panic. His funds, which he's been spending carelessly, are about to run out. He's disappointed Herbert, a man he didn't quite respect but with whom he hoped to remain in good favor. This panic fuels his anxiety regarding his relationship to Dickie and Marge's intrusions into it. Desperate to ingratiate himself to Dickie once more, Tom suggests a trip, and the two men settle, begrudgingly, on San Remo, in a move that betrays both their exhaustion with one another. The refrigerator delivers the final blow as Tom realizes that Dickie is not interested in sharing a life of travel and leisure with him; Tom is once more on his own.

CHAPTER 12

Marge declines Tom and Dickie's invitation to San Remo, but asks them to pick up a special cologne for her from a French shop there. Tom and Dickie share a suitcase, as the trip is going to be a short one. These details make Tom feel nervous and resentful of both Marge and Dickie. On the train to San Remo, Dickie is polite and cheerful, but Tom feels Dickie is overcompensating. Tom feels an "aversion to San Remo before they even get there." On top of it all, Dickie tells Tom that he would like to go to Cortina alone with Marge—he thinks he "owes" her a "pleasant holiday." Tom reacts badly, but suggests that they stop in Cannes to look around town. Dickie acquiesces.

Though the details of the first stretch of Tom and Dickie's San Remo trip might seem small and inconsequential, Highsmith renders them in such a way that they contribute to Tom's downward spiral into self-doubt, jealousy, anger, and resentment. Tom views Dickie's shortening of the trip length, his refusal to go to Paris, his catering to Marge's desires, and his request to go to Cortina as stabs to the heart, and, knowing Tom Ripley, it is not a far-flung possibility that some form of retribution is close to follow.

On the beach in Cannes, Tom and Dickie spot a group of men making a human pyramid, and Dickie makes reference to them being "sprightly." Tom feels a "sharp thrust of shame," remembering both Dickie and Marge's questioning of his sexuality and Aunt Dottie's labeling of him as a "sissy."

Dickie's mockery of "sprightly" men is to Tom a direct assault. Though Tom and Dickie have both insisted vehemently that they are straight, Tom's "shame" regarding the tauntings of his childhood is too great.

That afternoon, Tom and Dickie leave for San Remo. Dickie sleeps on the train, and Tom stares at him as he does. He considers stealing Dickie's **signet ring** on the last day of the trip. As he continues to watch Dickie sleep, he feels "affection, impatience," and "frustration." He realizes "not for the first time" that he wants to kill Dickie. He concocts a plan to murder him and make it look like an accident and, moreover, to "become Dickie Greenleaf…step right into Dickie's shoes."

With his rage toward Dickie at a fever pitch, Tom ignores his more complicated feelings and fantasizes about Dickie's murder. Not only will Tom get revenge on Dickie for all of his recent slights, but he will be able to easily "become" Dickie. The reward is too great, and Highsmith imbues Tom's thoughts with the sense that he has already fully committed to carrying out the murder.

In San Remo, Tom suggests that the two of them take a **boat** out into the bay. Dickie agrees, and they rent a boat and set off. Though Tom is afraid of water, he is determined to go through with his plan. He notes that no one from land can see them at all—"he could have hit Dickie, or kissed him, or thrown him overboard."

Tom's fear of water must be quashed again as he heads out into the bay to kill Dickie. The privacy the two of them have out on the water is Tom's perfect ideal—he longs to be alone with Dickie forever, even as he prepares to murder him.

Dickie slows the **boat's** motor so that Tom can jump in for a swim, and, when he does, Tom smacks him over the head with an oar. Dickie is "groggily surprised," then shocked and angry and "glowering and fierce" as, after a few more blows, he loses consciousness and begins to bleed from the forehead. Dickie screams and groans frighteningly in the bottom of the boat, twitching as he does. To silence him, Tom delivers several more blows to the forehead, and then, still not satisfied, Tom uses a "bayonet grip" to bludgeon Dickie's body until it goes fully limp. Immediately, Tom removes **Dickie's rings** and pockets them, then strips Dickie of the rest of his possessions, including Marge's perfume.

The murder is brutal and dehumanizing, yet Dickie's "surprise" as it begins and his "fierce" protests as it continues do nothing to deter Tom from his goal. Highsmith's prose describes this gore in the lush detail she uses to talk of luxurious meals and fine possessions. Before dumping the body, Tom pockets Dickie's rings, as they symbolize to him Dickie's wealth and confidence in his identity. They will also be a central part of Tom's disguise.

While attempting to sink Dickie's body, Tom accidentally starts the **boat's** motor and falls into the water. He panics, but manages to reach up and shut the motor off, then pull himself back aboard. After resting for a moment, he restarts the engine and steers the boat toward a small cove. Once ashore he gathers stones and loads them into the boat, then shoves it out to sea. He falls facedown onto the beach, exhausted, and begins to "plan" his return to his hotel, then to Mongibello, crafting the story he will tell.

Tom encounters his fear of water at his moment of great triumph, symbolizing his having been pulled down into some other, terrible state. Careful to cover his tracks, Tom refuses to allow himself to rest until the boat has been sunk to his satisfaction, and, when he does rest, he lulls himself with plans of how he will deceive everyone he knows.

CHAPTER 13

Tom returns to San Remo, exhausted, and he begins to cover up the murder. He cleans his bloodstained clothes and packs Dickie's bag "just as Dickie had always packed it." He then catches a train south, and, as night falls and the train travels the countryside, he has "an ecstatic moment thinking of all the pleasures that lay before him now with Dickie's money: other beds, tables, seas, ships, suitcases, shirts, years of freedom, years of pleasure." Tom feels "happy, content, and utterly, utterly confident, as he has never been before in his life."

Tom is already practicing Dickie's habits and mannerisms, "ecstatic" to finally have the opportunity to live in Dickie's skin. Being close to Dickie as a friend was never going to be enough—possessing Dickie's identity and material goods is what allows Tom to feel "confident" for the first time in his entire life.

Stepping off the bus in Mongibello, Tom immediately runs into Marge, dressed in her **bathing suit**. She asks where Dickie is, and Tom replies that Dickie has gone to Rome, and that he is here to collect some of Dickie's belongings to bring back to him. Tom gives Marge her perfume, and she asks where Dickie is staying and how long he'll be gone. Tom tells her to write to the American Express in Rome, and assures her that Dickie will be back by the end of the week.

Tom despises Marge, and he hung onto her perfume only so he wouldn't arouse her suspicions about him any further. He delights in delivering the news that "Dickie" will be moving to Rome and abandoning her, happy that, in her mind, he has finally triumphed over her in securing Dickie's deepest affections.

Marge leaves to go to the beach, and Tom sets upon Dickie's things. He dresses himself in Dickie's clothes, collects Dickie's recent letters, packs Dickie's suitcases, and attempts to decide which home furnishings he should keep, which he should sell, and which he should "bequeath" to Marge.

Tom is frenzied and joyful as he luxuriates in Dickie's things and plans out what he will do with Dickie's larger possessions. The material wealth is just as important to him as possessing the identity of Dickie Greenleaf.

The following morning, as Tom finishes up the packing, Marge stops by. Tom tells her that he's received a letter from Dickie stating Dickie's intent to move to Rome indefinitely, and that Tom should collect "all he can handle" of Dickie's possessions and bring them straight away. Tom tells Marge that Dickie won't be going to Cortina, but that he doesn't want his absence to prevent Marge from going. He tells Marge that she can have the refrigerator. Marge, distraught, asks if Tom is planning to live with Dickie in Rome, and Tom tells her that he is going to "help him get settled." Tom can see that Marge is "shocked and hurt to silence." Marge leaves, dazed, and though Tom fears for a moment that she will try to call Dickie in Rome or even travel there to find him, he tells himself that there are "enough hotels in Rome to keep her busy for days."

In a cruel irony, Tom leaves Marge with the refrigerator. He first perceived the refrigerator as Dickie's way of tethering himself to Marge and to Mongibello, but now Tom gives her the refrigerator as if to punish her for having thought she could have Dickie to herself. Marge's fear of being abandoned by Dickie—and being abandoned in favor of Tom—seems to have come true, and she asks Tom of his plans in disbelief. In this passage, Tom begins his new pattern of constantly thinking far ahead in order to cover his tracks; he allows himself to take comfort in the fact that he believes Marge is too dull to figure out his ploy.

Tom searches the Neapolitan newspapers for anything about a bloodstained **boat** having been found, but there is nothing in the papers. He finds solace in remembering that neither he nor Dickie gave their names to the boatmaster in San Remo. After an espresso at the local café, where he tells all of Dickie's Mongibello acquaintances the false story about Dickie's trip to Rome, he takes a taxi to the train station. He's had Dickie's linens and paintings packed up and shipped, along with three suitcases. Tom has tied up all of Dickie's affairs in Mongibello, laying the groundwork for the sale of Dickie's house and boat.

Once again, looking to cover his tracks if he must, Tom scours the newspaper for news of himself—another of his increasingly narcissistic behaviors. He spreads the story of Dickie's moving to Rome as widely as he can, in hopes that it will cover his own tracks. Tom is like an animal preparing for winter: he is gathering money, information, and possessions in order to hide away as Dickie in peace.

Once in Rome, Tom writes Marge a letter from "Dickie," explaining that "he" doesn't want to see Marge for a while in hopes that he can "discover how he really feels about her." He also explains that he'll be studying with a painter called Di Massimo—a fictional person of Tom's own invention—and that she should not try to contact him.

This is Tom's final "blow" to Marge—he is so sure of his ability to embody Dickie's voice that he writes Marge a dismissive letter, twisting the knife of "Dickie's" abandonment.

Tom realizes that he showed Dickie's passport at the hotel's front desk instead of his own—by mistake, but without incident. He heads out to a local drugstore and buys some makeup in order to further disguise himself. After returning to the hotel, Tom spends the night practicing Dickie's signature—Dickie's monthly check from Herbert is supposed to arrive in just over a week.

Tom's realization that he can pass for Dickie with very little alteration to his appearance provides him with a kind of thrill—he nonetheless feels he must do more to fully inhabit "Dickie," and he views it as an exciting and even fun challenge.

CHAPTER 14

The next day Tom moves hotels. In his new room, he holds "imaginary conversations" with Fausto, Freddie, and Marge—practicing his imitation of Dickie, in case any one of them calls him on the phone. He practices "jumping into his own character again," noting that he has already begun to forget "the exact timbre of Tom Ripley's voice."

As Tom slides deeper and deeper into the "character" of Dickie, he is careful to try not to lose himself fully. Tom has already forgotten the sound of his own voice, demonstrating his hollow and completely unformed identity and sense of self.

Tom goes out to sightsee and look at apartments—it is "impossible ever to be lonely or bored so long as he is Dickie Greenleaf." He collects Dickie's mail at American Express—there is a letter from Marge, in which she denounces Tom, telling Dickie she believes Tom is "using" him, has a "bad influence" on him, and "isn't normal enough to have any kind of sex life."

The letter from Marge, though it should hurt Tom, just amuses him—he still feels that he's won, and that her protestations against him can do absolutely nothing to harm him. As far as she's concerned, Tom and Dickie are happy together, and her anger has no effect on that imagined bliss.

Tom writes a letter to Herbert and Emily Greenleaf as Dickie, telling them he is looking for an apartment in Rome and will be studying with Di Massimo. He also asks Herbert to send along some files from the shipbuilding business so that he can "keep up."

Tom is widening the reach of his invented story about Dickie's plans, and also infiltrating the Greenleaf family business in case becoming more involved suits him later on.

Tom leaves for Paris, delighted at the chance to finally see the city. Once there, he falls in love with the atmosphere of the city, and is thrilled by the idea that, while sitting at a café, someone might recognize him as Dickie. He thinks of "tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow being Dickie Greenleaf," relishing his possession of Dickie's things and persona—and Dickie's money.

Tom has longed to visit Paris since arriving in Europe, and the chance to experience it as Dickie is a joy beyond his wildest dreams. His bright future stretches ahead of him, and he feels complete bliss in having abandoned his own identity and taken on Dickie's.

Tom is invited to a party by some people he met at a café, and he is delighted to be able to "behave as he had always wanted to behave at a party" and to have a "clean slate" and an "annihilation of his past and of himself." As he leaves the party, he realizes it has been over a month since Freddie Miles's party at Cortina passed by, and he forgot to write to decline Freddie's invitation. After leaving Paris, Tom visits Lyon, Arles, Marseille, Cannes, Nice, and Monte Carlo. Though it is winter, and grey and dark, Tom delights in the "romance" and "disappointment" of each place he visits.

Tom longed for the "annihilation of his past and of himself," but what self was there to annihilate? He has completely shed whatever thin qualities made him who he was as Tom Ripley, and is now so lost in his identity as Dickie that he scarcely notices the passage of time.

When Tom returns to Rome, a letter from Marge is waiting, saying that she is departing Europe in early March and plans to send her unfinished book to a publisher. Tom returns her letter as Dickie, telling her that "Tom Ripley" has left Europe. He says that he—Dickie—is still hunting for an apartment (another lie, since he has already found one.) Another letter arrives from one of Dickie's acquaintances in Mongibello, informing "Dickie" that three pieces of furniture have sold and a prospective buyer for the boat has arisen. Tom celebrates by taking himself to an elegant dinner. He plans to open a bank account in Tom Ripley's name and to put a little bit of money in it "from time to time." "After all," he thinks, he has "two people to take care of."

Tom delights in Marge's leaving Europe—he sees it as her having given up and admitted defeat. He is careful not to let her know where he's living, though, always one step ahead of everyone around him. With the news of Dickie's furniture and boat selling, it seems as if Tom's luck will never run out—he now has security, an income, and complete and total freedom. The thought of "taking care" of Tom Ripley, though, still holds some allure, and for the first time Tom acknowledges his burgeoning ability to exist in two identities at once.

CHAPTER 15

Tom enjoys his life in Rome, and he continues to study Italian. He is careful, though, to keep himself from learning some of its proper usages, as Dickie often misused tenses here and there. Tom decorates his apartment with the help of Signora Buffi, his landlady. He makes a few acquaintances, but he only introduces himself as Dickie to a couple of people, and he avoids making close friends. He feels "alone yet not at all lonely, himself and yet not himself." He is Dickie "from the moment he gets out of bed."

As he settles into his bustling new life in Rome, Tom proves himself to be a master of deception by constantly staying ahead of the pitfalls that could get him discovered—or so he thinks. As he is more and more absorbed in Dickie's identity, he distances himself from the people around him and retreats further and further into polishing and perfecting his own charade.

While packing for a trip to Spain and Sicily, there comes a knock at Tom's door. He answers it to find Freddie Miles in the hall. Tom quickly slips off **Dickie's rings**, greeting Freddie and telling him that Dickie is out of the apartment and should be back soon. Freddie is surprised and intrigued to find Tom "staying with" Dickie, but Tom assures him that it's "just for a few hours" while Dickie is at lunch. Freddie found "Dickie's" address "by the damnedest luck." Tom tells Freddie that Dickie is leaving on a trip "to be alone." Freddie presses Tom for an answer as to whether he lives with Dickie, noting that Dickie has "loaded him up with all his jewelry" and implying that there is more going on between Tom and Dickie than meets the eye. Tom insists that it's a loan, and urges Freddie to go looking for Dickie at a restaurant nearby. Freddie leaves.

The reappearance of Freddie Miles threatens Tom's idyllic life—he is able to slip back into his own persona, but he must do a lot of footwork to keep up with Freddie's inquisitive and suspicious mind. Freddie's implications that Tom and Dickie are living together as more than friends, and that Dickie has "loaded" Tom up are almost more than Tom can stand, and he desperately does all he can to get Freddie to leave. Freddie represents a part of Dickie's old life, and Tom, already threatened by Freddie's presence when Dickie was still alive, wants no part of Freddie now.

Tom listens as Freddie descends the stairs, and he hears Freddie run into Signora Buffi, who insists that only "Signor Greenleaf" is upstairs and has not yet gone out today. Tom hears Freddie' footsteps coming back up the stairs; when he reaches the door, Tom grabs a "heavy glass ashtray" and bludgeons Freddie with it until he's dead.

Tom's second murder is perpetrated out of a combination of hatred and necessity—he knows that, as far as Freddie is concerned, his jig is up, and rather than twisting his way out of suspicion as he always does, Tom opts to dispatch Freddie, since he loathes Freddie already.

After using a towel to soak up the blood and searching Freddie's pockets to find car keys and a wallet, Tom concocts a plan to make the room look as if Dickie and Freddie enjoyed an afternoon of heavy drinking. As Tom stares at Freddie's lifeless corpse, he thinks that Freddie is a "selfish, stupid bastard who had sneered at Dickie because he suspected him of sexual deviation." Tom laughs, thinking: "Where was the sex? Where was the deviation?" Tom tells Freddie out loud that he is "a victim of his own dirty mind."

Tom's ingenuity when it comes to covering his own tracks comes into play again, as he develops a plan to make himself appear totally innocent. Tom's deep insecurity regarding accusations about his sexuality is revealed to have been part of the reason for his having murdered Freddie. Tom insists that Freddie is a victim of himself, removing blame from Tom and justifying the crime.

CHAPTER 16

After dark, in a "precisely calculated state of intoxication," Tom drags Freddie down to his car. A man asks in Italian if everything is all right, but Tom's plan has worked—it appears as if he and Freddie are simply stumbling after a drunken night. Tom puts Freddie into the car and drives him down the Via Appia, eventually arriving at a cemetery. He leaves Freddie behind a tombstone, and drives back toward Rome. He wipes his fingerprints from the car and, once in Rome, parks Freddie's car across from a nightclub, then steals Freddie's money and drops his wallet down a sewer grate. Tom walks quickly home "as if he were fleeing a sick, passionate pursuer."

It is at this point in the novel that Tom's machinations and cover-ups begin their descent into an almost farcical complexity. With so much to disguise, Tom must constantly be watchful and inventive, and his fleeing a "sick, passionate pursuer" at this chapter's end represents his own realization that his game is growing more and more complicated. Tom does not feel remorse, exactly, but a sense of unease is surely beginning to overtake him.

CHAPTER 17

The next morning, Tom, hungover, searches the papers for anything about Freddie's death, but there is nothing. He prepares to leave on his trip to Spain, but before he can depart for the train, the phone rings. It is the police, asking if "Dickie" is friends with an American named "Fred-derick Meelays." The police explain that Freddie's corpse has been found, and they want to make sure that Freddie had indeed been at Dickie's apartment the day before. Tom confirms this, telling the police that Freddie left at "five or six" in the evening. The police ask "Dickie" if he will answer some questions if they send an interrogator, and Tom agrees, though he will now miss his train and boat.

Tom knew that Freddie's body would be discovered, and he has engineered the situation to be a kind of controlled detonation. He was hoping to be able to leave for Spain, but he knows now that perhaps he had overestimated the innocence Dickie would be presumed to have. Tom is adjusting to the privileges of wealth and status, and that combined with his own sense of entitlement and superiority has led him to misjudge the impact of Freddie's murder.

Fausto calls for Dickie, telling him that he's in town and wants to have lunch. Tom, as Dickie, tells Fausto to meet him at the train station, explaining that he is leaving soon for Naples, but he doesn't intend to actually meet Fausto.

Fausto's appearance serves as a reminder to Tom that he may or may not be in over his head, having underestimated the difficulty of removing "Dickie" from his former life.

The police arrive to interrogate "Dickie." Tom answers their questions and offers to comply with anything the officers need, but he explains that he was planning to leave for Spain. The police tell him he must remain in Rome. Tom decides to stay at a hotel, and he goes to one called the Inghilterra. At noon, Freddie's murder is in all the papers. Tom remains in the hotel until dinnertime, when he buys the evening papers and goes to a restaurant. On the very last page of the last newspaper he finds a small headline describing the discovery of a possibly-bloodstained **boat** near San Remo.

Tom brazenly meets with the police as Dickie, still confident in his charm and protected status. However, the news of the discovery of the boat shakes Tom—his worst-case scenario is beginning to come true, and he knows that soon there will be much more for him to reckon with than previously imagined.

Tom realizes that if an investigation is opened and a body is discovered in the water, it will have decomposed beyond recognition. Thus, it will be assumed to be Tom Ripley's body, since Tom has been living as Dickie and has all but abandoned his identity as Tom. Dickie will then be a suspect in not one but two murders—Freddie's and Tom's. Tom returns to his room, after finding out that he's missed a call from Marge while out. Tom sits in a chair, smoking and chastising himself for choosing Rome as his place of residence.

Tom's wheels spin and the intricacies of his deceptions begin to unravel. He must come up with an alternative plan, as he has not accounted for error or for the possibility that it would become unsustainable to live out his days as Dickie. Moreover, he has effectively placed himself on grand display by choosing to live in Rome, an enormous city and center of social and cultural life.

Tom lies down on the bed and begins to fall asleep. As he does, he experiences a vision of Dickie "soaking wet, bent over him" and screaming, joyfully and maniacally, "'I swam! I'm alive!'" Tom shakes himself awake and attempts to calm himself down and expunge the vision by trying "to think about what Dickie would be thinking about." He sits down to compose a letter to Dickie's parents, in order to try to "set their minds at rest about the Freddie affair," but he is unable to concentrate, and gives up.

Tom is haunted not by an emotional kind of guilt but rather a practical one. He is afraid that his secrets and crimes will resurface and disrupt the calm appearance of his new life. Tom, truly rattled by his vision, finds himself unable to be calmed even by the ritual of abandoning his own thoughts and habits for Dickie's—he cannot escape into the safety of Dickie's identity any longer.

CHAPTER 18

The next morning, Tom wakes up thinking of Marge. He has a "horrible premonition" that she is bound for Rome. The phone rings—there are two policemen downstairs, and Tom instructs the concierge to send them up. The police, interviewing "Dickie," ask him if he is aware of the whereabouts of Tom Ripley. They think he may be dead, and they ask "Dickie" if he saw Tom following their trip to San Remo. "Dickie" insists that he saw Tom once again in Rome, remembering that Marge knew he went back to Rome after collecting Dickie's things in Mongibello. The police continue to interrogate "Dickie," while Tom tries to stay ahead of their many questions. He tells the police that Tom did not have many friends and that he himself "doesn't even know him very well." Tom asks the police if he is free to leave for Palermo that afternoon, and gives them the name of the hotel he plans to stay at. He tells them to notify them if they find "Tom Ripley."

Tom's fears are well-founded—with the arrival of the Roman police, Tom is put on the defensive. His charade as Dickie seems in danger of falling apart, as the police inquire as to the whereabouts of Tom Ripley, unable to turn him up anywhere since after the date of the boat trip. Tom experiences a revelatory moment in which he observes himself from the outside; someone unknowable, someone with very few friends, someone with absolutely no support.

The phone rings, and Tom answers it—it's Marge. He tells her that he is getting dressed and Dickie is out at the police station, answering some questions. He tells her to wait for him inside a bar called Angelo's and that he'll be down in a few minutes. Tom finishes packing and pays his hotel bill, telling the clerk to tell anyone who asks for him that he's left the city.

Tom narrowly avoids Marge as he escapes to Palermo—like Fausto, she is another symbol of the difficulty he will have in abandoning the trappings of Dickie's old life in order to make a new one for himself.

CHAPTER 19

As Tom's boat arrives at the dock in Palermo, Tom looks to see if the police are waiting for him, but there are none. He purchases some newspapers and heads to his hotel—when he arrives, he asks if there are any messages for Dickie, but again, there are none.

Tom, guilty and fearful, attempts to begin to cover his tracks as he arrives in a new place, but he finds, to his relief, that nothing new has caught up to him—yet.

Tom considers writing a letter to Marge telling her that he and Dickie are "very happy together." He amuses himself at the thought, then begins to worry that she will tell the police that she talked with him over the phone in Rome, and that the police will be looking for him now. Tom takes comfort in thinking that "risks are what make the whole thing fun."

Comforted by the calm in Palermo, Tom again feels a renewed drive toward risk and toward toying with people's lives and emotions. He is emboldened by the appearance of renewed stability, and he feels again superior and entitled.

As Tom bathes and dresses, he realizes that anticipation is "more pleasant to him than experiencing," and he wonders if "when he spends evenings alone, handling Dickie's possessions, is that experiencing or anticipation?" Tom wants to travel to Greece, but the idea of experiencing it as himself and not as Dickie brings tears to his eyes.

A portrait of Tom's life as Dickie is revealed to be one of loneliness and obsessive hoarding—the line between experience and anticipation is so thin for Tom that he cannot discern which of the two is occurring at any given moment.

The next morning there is a letter from Marge to Dickie, asking him to "admit that he can't live without his little chum," and pitying him for not being able to be "proud of the person he loves." The letter amuses Tom wildly, but he isn't distracted for long—soon the phone rings. The Palermo police force is looking for Tom Ripley, and Tom, speaking to the police as Dickie, insists that though Tom is not with him, he might be in Rome.

Marge continues her rightful assault on Tom's character as she mourns Dickie's absence. This, combined with the police's hunt for Tom Ripley, inspires a sense of unease in Tom once again, interrupting his introspective and restorative time in Palermo.

Tom spends the rest of his morning composing a letter to the Greenleafs, realizing that his voice as Dickie flows more freely than his voice as Tom ever did.

Tom feels a renewed sense of security in his identity as Dickie, just as he fears his ability to be Dickie is speeding to an end.

CHAPTER 20

Five "calm, solitary, agreeable" days pass as Tom explores Palermo, Sicily. He is lonely, realizing that he will "have to keep a distance from people, always." In Palermo, he takes on a new role: that of a "detached observer of life."

Tom's realization that his life will not be what he hoped it would be saddens him, but he leans into his "new role" nonetheless.

Two letters arrive: one from Dickie's bank in Naples and one from his trust company in New York. The letters call into question the veracity of the signatures on Dickie's recent checks. Tom practices Dickie's signature, then sends a signed letter and signature card to the New York trust company, and a similar letter to the bank in Naples, assuring them that he himself, Dickie Greenleaf, has signed the checks, and is happy to comply with any of either bank's further needs.

Tom's expert copies of Dickie's signatures are not what they appeared to be, and they serve as a metaphor for Tom's inability to ever fully inhabit Dickie, as hard as he might try and as far as he may go.

Tom's desire to go to Capri has "vanished," and he walks aimlessly through the streets of Palermo. He purchases a "gloomy" painting of "two bearded saints descending a dark hill in moonlight" without haggling the price and brings it back to his hotel.

Tom purchases the ugly painting—a "gloomy" object in stark contrast to Dickie's gleaming possessions—as a purposefully wasteful and destructive act, since he fears his funds are about to be cut off.

CHAPTER 21

A letter arrives for Dickie, "urgently" requesting that he come to Rome to answer some questions concerning Tom Ripley. Tom plans to return to Italy as himself, buy a secondhand car somewhere far from Rome, and tell the authorities that he's been roaming Italy for several months, unaware of the search for Tom Ripley. He "hates" becoming Tom Ripley again, and hates to have to abandon all of Dickie's fine possessions.

Though it is difficult for Tom Ripley—emotionally and practically—to return to life as himself, he knows that it is what he must do in order to survive. He has luxuriated in putting on the appearance of being Dickie, and has pushed himself so far as to believe it could be his reality.

The next morning, Tom wakes seized by the an idea: he will check all of Dickie's belongings at the American Express under a different name once he returns to Italy, and claim them at some time in the future. He packs up Dickie's trunks, scrapes the initials off, and sends them ahead to Venice. The only thing he keeps of Dickie's are his **rings**.

Tom, obsessed with preserving his stake in Dickie's wealth and possessions, squirrels them away for himself. He keeps the rings with him, as they are small nuggets of all that Dickie represents to him, and he wants to keep them close.

Tom takes a train through Italy to a small town, Trento, and buys a car. There is nothing in the papers about Tom Ripley, Freddie Miles, or the discovery of the **boat** in San Remo. He marks up a guidebook and breaks it in in order to help corroborate his own story, and he spends a night sleeping in his car before heading to Venice and booking a room in a nondescript hotel.

Tom makes sure that every detail of his story looks right, even spending a night in his car in order to have a small nugget of truth on which he can base his lie. Tom is careful with appearances, and he can easily convince himself that appearance and reality equate with one another.

Tom goes out to dinner, purchasing the evening news on his way. On the second page of one of the papers, a headline describes the search for Dickie Greenleaf, who is missing after a "Sicilian holiday." Tom considers "playing himself up a little more" when he presents himself to the authorities, just in case the policemen he speaks to are the same ones who'd interrogated him as Dickie. He decides to bide his time and wait until a few more items related to Dickie's disappearance appear in the newspaper, so as not to appear suspicious.

Once unsure of his identity and only able to sponge off others to determine who he was, Tom Ripley now feels that he is confident enough in his imagined image that he can "play himself up" and do a successful imitation of who others have perceived him to be.

CHAPTER 22

The following morning, the papers say that Dickie is "exposing himself to suspicion of participation" and must present himself to the authorities in order to be cleared of that suspicion. Tom decides that he needs to identify himself as soon as possible. Tom goes to the nearest police station, where the Roman police are telephoned. A representative is scheduled to arrive at eight that evening. Tom spends the rest of the day in his room, and just after eight he receives a call that Tenente Roverini of the Rome police is downstairs. Tom asks for the concierge to send the investigator up.

Now that Dickie is a suspect in two murders, Tom is almost eager to resume life as himself. He contacts the police in order to commit fully to his next planned deception, which requires him to appear ignorant of the madness he himself has wrought.

The tenente questions Tom as to the last place he saw Dickie, and as to where he himself has been. When the tenente tells Tom that there is no record of him having stayed in any hotels, Tom tells him that he often slept in his car. The tenente asks Tom why Dickie is hiding himself from the police, and Tom tells him that Dickie is "not very cooperative," but couldn't possibly have murdered Freddie Miles. The tenente asks about Marge, and Tom implies that both Dickie and Freddie were in love with her. After a couple more inconclusive questions about Dickie's forged signatures on his checks, the tenente thanks Tom for his cooperation and leaves.

Tom seems almost gossipy with the tenente, painting subjective portraits of Dickie, Marge, and Freddie, and presenting himself as an innocent and bewildered bystander to their dramas. Tom is a master of appearances, and this is one of his most finely-tuned, thoroughly-planned deceptions yet.

Tom makes a reservation for himself at a fine restaurant. "Suddenly ravenous," he looks forward to eating something "luscious and expensive." As he dresses for dinner, he's struck by a "bright idea: he ought to have an envelope in his possession, on which should be written that it is not to be opened for several months. Inside it should be a will signed by Dickie, bequeathing Tom his money and his income."

Tom's confidence in having conned the Roman policeman into believing his grand lie inspires him to once again engage in excess and risk. He dines luxuriously, showcasing his obsessive greed, and considers a scheme grander than any he's attempted yet, believing fully and confidently that he will be able to pull it off.

CHAPTER 23

Tom writes a letter to Herbert stating that he "feels Dickie may have killed himself." He receives a letter from Marge—who is in Munich—declining a previous invitation to visit Venice, and stating that she "does not agree with Tom at all that Dickie might have committed suicide."

By planting the idea of Dickie's suicide in Herbert and Marge's head, Tom hopes to take the spotlight off of himself and create the appearance of a disturbed, hopeless Dickie—a lost cause whose disappearance isn't worth investigating further.

Dickie's disappearance—and possible death—is still frequently referenced in the papers, and the police continue to "comb" Rome, Naples, and Paris for any sign of Dickie. One paper also features a small write-up of Tom, describing him as a "young well-to-do American who lives in a palazzo in Venice." Though Tom has never thought of his new apartment as a "palace," he does admire its beauty and amenities—Tom has a garden, servants (an Italian couple named Anna and Ugo) and a luxurious bedroom.

Tom continues to live an unearned life of luxury and excess, and he is thrilled by the success of having created the appearance of having wealth, an image that exists as a reality in the minds of the press and the public. He is settling into his "new" identity as Tom Ripley, a version of himself who attracts attention and interest.

Tom feels self-confident as of late; so confident, in fact, that he has composed Dickie's "will," and signed it in Dickie's hand. He places the will in a pocket of his suitcase.

Tom's confidence in his identity directly correlates with how far he will push the risk of losing it all.

The papers feature a small story about Dickie's bank letters, revealing that they believe the perpetrator of Dickie's murder must have been close enough to him to have access to those letters. This piece of news gives Tom "the feeling that he is being followed."

Despite his newfound confidence, Tom cannot shake his obsession with being pursued and his drive toward escape.

Tom attends a few parties, though he is "not at all in the mood." He visits the house of Contessa, Roberta (Titi) della Latta-Cacciaguerra. At each party, people ask him incessantly about Dickie—whether he was in love with Marge, and what could possibly have happened to him.

Tom is now a figure of intrigue, a role that excites and occupies him. His appearance and the reality behind that appearance are completely disjointed, but he is successful in hiding that chasm.

Each day, Tom awaits a letter from Marge or Herbert—he feels prepared to see them both and to answer any questions they might ask him. He longs to take a trip to Greece, but he doesn't want to leave Venice until "something happens."

His confidence at a fever pitch, Tom feels ready to take on anything that Marge, Herbert, or anyone might throw his way—again, Tom is excited by risk.

One day in early April, Tom receives a call from Marge. She is at the railway station in Venice; Herbert is behind in Rome. When she arrives, she tells Tom of how she's been helping Herbert to question people in Rome and in Mongibello. Though Marge irritates Tom, he "puts on a big act" and shows her as much affection as he can muster. Over lunch, Marge "quizzes Tom more acutely than any police officer" as to Dickie's state of mind the last time they saw each other, and she begs Tom to tell her how Dickie really felt about her. Tom tells Marge that though Dickie cared for her, he only wanted a "casual relationship" with her. Marge spills her martini on the table, and Tom is filled with a sudden hatred of her, remembering "her **bra** hanging over the windowsill in Mongibello," and dreading the fact that "her underwear will be draped over his chairs tonight if he invites her to stay." Nevertheless, he asks her if she'll spend the night, but he dreads "the long Italian evening ahead of them."

Though Tom dislikes Marge, he welcomes her affectionately and warmly in the name of keeping up appearances, even when she "quizzes" him and forces him to spin new stories. Soon, though, his capacity for deception wears thin, and he is reminded of his disdain for her and all that she represents—femininity, competition, and her having been born into a life that Tom felt he deserved. His instincts toward hatred are eventually outweighed by his need to appear kindly in order to continue the charade of the "new" Tom Ripley.

CHAPTER 24

Later that night, Tom calls Herbert from a friend's house—Herbert believes that Dickie is dead, and, because he has "never thought much of Dickie's stability," he agrees with Tom that it's vaguely possible that Dickie has killed himself. Tom invites Herbert to Venice, but he declines. Marge and two of Tom's friends, in order to amuse themselves, bat about the idea that Dickie traded passports with a fisherman or cigarette peddler in order to live a "quiet life," and thus Dickie is hiding out somewhere, dodging the investigation of his whereabouts. Tom plays along, laughing loudly. Later, over dinner, Tom urges Marge to spin theories and "fantasies" as to where Dickie has gone, though it makes him feel "ill." The two take a gondola home, but find that when they get to the front door, they've forgotten the keys. They take another boat through the canals to the back entrance, and then take a short walk from where they're dropped to the rear of Tom's apartment. Tom feels "more frightened that night walking with Marge than if he had been alone."

Tom is not sure whose reality he wants to believe in: Herbert's reality, in which Dickie, an unstable and troubled man, is dead and gone, or Marge's reality, in which Dickie is a trickster and a loner, playing manipulative games in order to hide himself away in pursuit of a life of solace. Tom leans obsessively in to the game of guessing at Dickie's whereabouts, sickened by his own role in creating this bizarre reality. With Marge at his side he feels seen, frightened, and vulnerable, as he is witness to her desperate games and she is witness, in some capacity, to his.

CHAPTER 25

Early the next morning, a telegram arrives for Tom—it is from Herbert, saying that he has changed his mind and will be arriving in Venice just before noon. Tom and Marge have a coffee and read the papers. It is a rare morning; nothing about Dickie or Freddie's murder is in the papers at all. Marge and Tom go to the station to meet Herbert. Marge asks if there is any news, and Herbert says there is none. The three of them go to lunch. Herbert is forlorn and "stony," and he glances around the restaurant "as if hoping for Dickie to come walking in." Herbert tells Tom and Marge that he has arranged for an American private eye named McCarron to come over to Italy to assist in the search.

Just as it seems that the onslaught of curiosity about Dickie and Freddie's disappearance and murder will never end, it ceases for a brief moment—only to resurge with Herbert's announcement that an American detective will soon be on the case. Herbert's forlorn desperation, as it always has been, is nothing more than lightly amusing to Tom.

Back at Tom's house, Tom urges Marge to head upstairs so that he and Herbert can speak alone—he knows Herbert will want to "quiz" him. Herbert asks Tom if he thinks that perhaps Dickie is hiding out at an obscure hotel or somewhere in the countryside—Tom states that it might be possible, but that Dickie also might have killed himself. He tells Herbert that, the last time he saw Dickie, he'd been morose and "shaken" by "the Miles thing." Herbert insists that Dickie has not committed suicide, and Tom indulges him, telling Herbert that perhaps Dickie could be in Greece or France or "several other countries." Herbert, exhausted, agrees.

Herbert seems unwilling—or unable—to believe that his son has killed himself, though he waffles back and forth as he is so baffled by the entire situation, and rightfully so: Tom has engineered a complicated, farcical ballet of disappearances and reappearances, feuds and follies and loose ends.

CHAPTER 26

Marge insists that Tom accompany her to an afternoon cocktail party, though he feels that they will only be there as a spectacle—as friends of the famous, missing Dickie Greenleaf. Tom is preoccupied at the party, worried by the impending arrival of Herbert's private investigator and unpleasantly reminded by the people at the party of "the people he had said good-bye to in New York." He loses himself in reverie, daydreaming about a trip to Greece. Soon Marge proposes leaving the party.

Despite wanting to have been picked out as Dickie's favorite, Tom is now wearied by the attention he receives as just a "friend" of Dickie's. He either wanted to be Dickie's favorite while Dickie lived or to possess Dickie's identity with Dickie dead, and so existing in a strange middle ground exhausts and frustrates him.

At dinner with Marge and Herbert, Tom tries to make up for his distant behavior at the party by being "pleasant and talkative." Herbert pays for the meal and tells Tom that he will return to Rome in the morning. Marge plans to go with him. Tom and Marge walk home from dinner together. Marge, giddy, laughs about having broken her **bra** strap, while Tom thinks about a letter he received earlier that afternoon from Bob Delancey. The police arrived at Tom's old brownstone to "question everybody in the house about an income tax fraud of a few months ago." At the end of the letter, Bob asked how much longer Tom planned to stay in Europe. Back in his siting room at home, rereading the letter, Tom thinks that he will stay in Europe "forever." He treasures evenings spent looking over his and Dickie's possessions, and poring over maps and guidebooks. Attached to his life of leisure abroad, he never wants to return to the States.

Tom exists in a strange limbo these days: exhausted and on edge, but nonetheless privately obsessed with his own cunning and the relative success of his intricate plot. He thinks fondly of his little con back in New York, impressed with how much grander his schemes have become and how much more material wealth and personal pleasure they have yielded. It seems that Marge and Herbert are soon to depart, allowing Tom to return fully to his magpie-like existence, alone with the relics of Dickie's luxurious life.

Marge enters the room holding a brown leather box containing **Dickie's rings**, which she discovered when looking for thread to sew her bra up. When Tom tells her that Dickie gave her the rings "to take care of," Marge becomes despondent, finally admitting that she believes Dickie did kill himself. She asks Tom why he never mentioned it before, and she insists they tell Herbert—"this," she says, "practically settles it." Tom fantasizes about bludgeoning Marge with his shoe and inventing a story in which she fell in a canal and died. He "terrifies" himself, afraid that he will soon "betray himself as a maniac." Knowing he will have to "face Herbert with the rings tomorrow," he begins to "invent" the memory of Dickie handing his rings over.

Marge's discovery of the rings enrages Tom and causes him great despair, so much so that he briefly considers turning her into his third victim. His obsession with the rings and all they represent is more valuable to him than a human life—Marge's life—and the realization of that fact, combined with the ease with which he was prepared to believe his own hastily-invented story as to how she died, causes him to retreat even further into himself.

CHAPTER 27

In the morning, Tom overhears Marge beginning to tell Herbert about the **rings** over the phone. When she hangs up, she tells Tom that Herbert now agrees that "it looks as if Dickie meant to kill himself." Tom showers and dresses, and then the telephone rings. Marge answers it—she tells Tom that the American detective has arrived, and is on his way from the airport.

Tom has skillfully engineered the appearance of Dickie's suicide, even if he has convinced everyone of that fact in a roundabout way. A master of deception, Tom now faces investigation at the hands of the American authorities, a threat that seems to him more serious than dealing with the Italian police.

Marge and Tom go over to Herbert's hotel, where he and the American detective, McCarron, are waiting for them. Marge hands the **rings** over, and McCarron asks Tom when Dickie gave them to him. Tom replies, "a few days after the murder of Freddie Miles." Tom insists that, because Dickie lent him "certain things" in the past, he didn't think much of the rings. Marge, however, "can't imagine Dickie without his rings," and she tells the detective that this is the reason she thinks "he was either intending to kill himself or change his identity."

The loss Tom feels at surrendering the rings is palpable—he'd held onto them as totems after coveting them for so long, and he had imbued them with a kind of magic in his ritual assessment of Dickie's possessions. To Herbert and Marge, the rings hold a similarly strong power, and seem to encapsulate Dickie's soul.

McCarron goes over the facts of Dickie's "disappearance" again, including the forgeries and the intricacies of Tom, Marge, and Dickie's friendship. McCarron then asks Tom to accompany him downstairs. Tom panics on the way to elevator, wondering if "this is the way they did it." He envisions himself being handed over to the Italian police, and he wills himself to not begin sweating. Downstairs, McCarron and Tom sit in the coffee bar, and McCarron asks Tom to describe "the San Remo **boat** in detail." He also asks Tom to describe Dickie's personality, to elaborate on Dickie's relationship with Marge, and whether or not he believes Dickie killed Freddie Miles. McCarron tells Tom that he plans to return to Rome today, and the two return to Herbert's room, where McCarron tells Marge he'd like to speak with her alone as well.

Tom's imagination runs away with him, as it is wont to do. He obsessively creates scenarios in his head, believing them to be true, and often with the goal of making them appear real. This vision, however, is a fearful and dreadful one, and yet Tom does not consider how he will escape. Rather, he complies completely with McCarron's questioning. McCarron luckily seems to view Tom as an innocent asset, someone who is as distraught over Dickie's disappearance and as devoted to finding the truth of it as Marge, Herbert, Emily—and the rest of the world.

Herbert and Tom say their goodbyes, and Tom returns home, where he spends the afternoon waiting on a telephone call from McCarron, but it never comes. Tom decides that he won't worry about any "trouble" from Marge, reassuring himself that she will "arrange everything in her dull imagination" to accept the idea of Dickie's suicide.

Tom continues to feel a sense of superiority as he dodges responsibility and accusation, thinking Marge "dull" and feeling secure in his belief that she will never discover the horrible reality of Dickie's death.

CHAPTER 28

The next day, McCarron calls Tom to ask for the names of all of Dickie's acquaintances in Mongibello, and whether or not he knew anybody in Rome or Naples. After the phone call, Tom holes up in his house for "several days," declining invitations to parties and avoiding photographers who come to his house to take his picture.

The encounters with McCarron have spooked Tom, causing him to retreat into himself and decline even opportunities to exercise his narcissistic impulses, such as parties and press coverage.

After six days, Tom calls Herbert in Rome; there is nothing new to report, he says. Herbert tells Tom of his intent to return to the States at the end of the week, stating that Dickie is either dead or deliberately hiding and continuing the search is futile.

Even Herbert's abandonment of the pursuit of knowledge as to Dickie's whereabouts does little to bring Tom joy.

Tom is invited to the house of one of his acquaintances, where he at last breaks down in tears, regretting his mistakes and mourning the life he "could have lived with Dickie."

Tom is despondent, frightened, and mournful of what it is he always really wanted but never let himself admit: a shared life with Dickie.

CHAPTER 29

Tom writes a letter to Herbert in which he describes finding Dickie's "will," which was "given" to him some time ago in Rome. He apologizes for not having remembered having the envelope sooner "because it would have proven much earlier that Dickie intended to take his own life." Privately, Tom thnks to himself that his gambit with the letter is "asking for trouble" and "might start a new investigation," but he goes forward with the plan because he is just in the "mood." He feels that "the very chanciness of trying for all of Dickie's money is irresistible." He is planning to sail for Greece in just three days, believing that it will "look better" to seem "unconcerned as to whether he got the money or not."

Once careful to cover his tracks when he took risks, Tom has now settled into a flirtatious dance with "chanciness." Having dulled himself to the experience of living a life of luxury and freedom, Tom now longs to create mazes from which he must escape, thrills which will provide him with the opportunity to feel something.

Tom visits the countess Titi, who tells him that the afternoon papers are saying that Dickie's suitcases and paintings have been found "right here in the American Express in Venice." The police have already begun to search the items for fingerprints. Tom reacts erratically to the news—he rambles on to Titi, telling her that the discovery of the suitcases in no way proves that Dickie is alive. He worries that the knot on Dickie's sunken body will come undone, and he racks his brain for anything in the suitcases that might offer the authorities his fingerprints. To calm himself, he tries to think of Greece, but he knows that with "the threat of the fingerprints hanging over his head" he'll never be able to enjoy himself. Tom begins to sob, and Titi attempts to comfort him to no avail.

The news of the discovery of Dickie's suitcases sends Tom into a spiral—he fears that he has been caught at last, and that a guillotine or ticking time bomb hangs over him, ready to bring the collapse of all he has worked to secure. Even the consolation of a trip, an escape, cannot soothe him now—his "sick, passionate pursuer," he feels, is just about to finally catch up to him after all this time.

CHAPTER 30

After several days, Tom has received no correspondence from Tenente Roverini in regards to Dickie's possessions having turned up in Venice. Tom is sleepless and nervous, expecting "the police to come knocking at any hour," but nonetheless he continues preparations for his departure. Anna and Ugo and several of his friends ask worriedly what the found suitcases might mean and, despite reacting in an "upset, pessimistic, desperate" way, no one suspects a thing, as the discovery of Dickie's possessions points to his having been murdered.

Tom's despondency over what he views as his inevitable capture is read by everyone around him as despair over the news of his best friend's almost-certain death. Tom has isolated himself completely through his countless lies, and his motives and feelings are unreadable to everyone he encounters.

Tom predicts that Herbert will get the will the day after tomorrow and that, by that time, the authorities "might know that the fingerprints were not Dickie's." If they take Tom's own fingerprints, Tom knows that "both murders will come out as naturally as ABC."

Tom knows that the will was the ultimate risk, and that it may bring his entire charade crumbling down—all he can do, though, is wait, and plan his final, great escape.

Tom boards the *Hellenes*, a boat bound for Greece, feeling like a "walking ghost." He falls asleep instantly and wakes after dark to take a walk on the ship. He worries obsessively, and convinces himself that he'll be caught. He believes, though, that everything he's done has been worth it, and he only regrets not yet having seen all the world.

Even in the hour of what Tom perceives as his doom, he feels that all of his lies, crimes, and transgressions have been "worth it" to taste the luxury and freedom he's tasted. Still, he hungers for more—Tom Ripley is a void that can never be filled.

When the boat arrives in Greece, four policemen are waiting on the dock. After stepping off the boat Tom approaches them, ready to accept his fate, but none of are paying him any attention at all. He buys some newspapers and returns to the dock to await his luggage. A headline in one of the newspapers states that the fingerprints found on Dickie's suitcases are identical to the fingerprints found throughout his apartment in Rome, and "there is speculation that he may have committed suicide." The papers conclude that the continued search for "Richard Greenleaf" is "futile."

Tom, in his nervousness, perceives the policemen as his pursuers, and he is shocked to find that they want nothing at all to do with him. His ritual of scouring the papers as a compass for what to do next provides him with enormous, unexpected relief for once.

Tom retrieves his luggage, slowly realizing that he is not suspected "at all… he is free. Except for the will." Tom boards a bus to Athens and, once there, goes straight to the American Express. There is a letter from Herbert waiting, which says that he and Emily will "carry out Richard's preferences and the spirit of them." They plan to give "Dickie's" will to their layers, who will then turn Dickie's trust fund and properties over to Tom.

Though Tom has been exonerated by the papers, he knows that the matter of the will looms over him still. At the American Express, this fear is calmed, and Tom realizes that his great escape is complete. He will inherit Dickie's riches and continue to live a life of freedom and luxury.

Tom imagines himself arriving in Crete, picturing four imaginary policemen waiting for him on the dock. He wonders if he will see policemen waiting for him "on every pier he'll ever approach," but he decides there is "no use" thinking about it. He jumps into a taxi, and instructs the driver to take him to the best hotel in town.

The shadow of fear that he will never truly escape his own anxiety and misery passes over Tom briefly, but he shoves it away immediately and resumes his never-ending quest for "the best" the world can offer him—what he feels he has always deserved.

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