

PICADOR

# Reading Group Gold

## Seducing Ingrid Bergman

By Chris Greenhalgh

### ABOUT THE BOOK

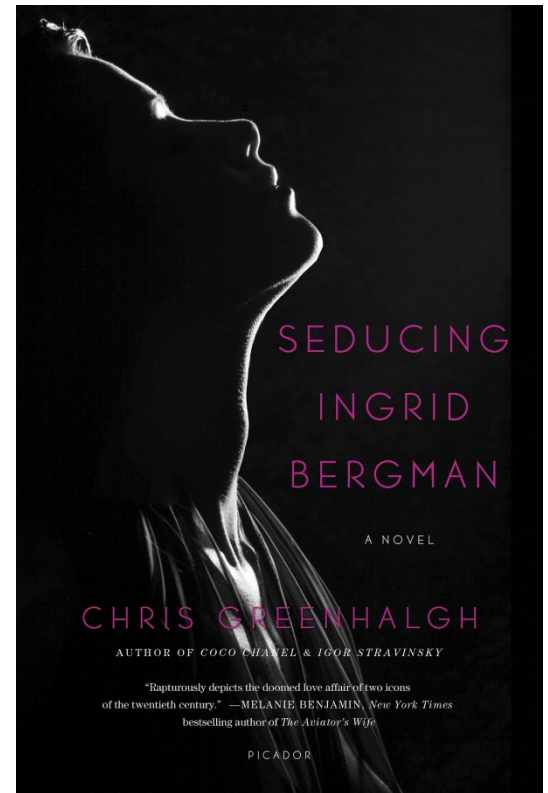
June 1945. When Ingrid Bergman walks into the lobby of the Ritz hotel in Paris, Capa is enchanted. From the moment he slips a mischievous invitation to dinner under her door, the two find themselves helplessly attracted. Played out against the cafés and nightclubs of Paris and the parties and studios of Hollywood, they pursue an intense and increasingly reckless affair.

But the light-hearted Capa, who likes nothing more than to spend his mornings reading in the tub and his afternoons at the racetrack, is not all that he seems. And Ingrid offers the promise of salvation to a man haunted by the horrors of war, his father's suicide, and the death of a former lover for which he blames himself. Addicted to risk, Capa must wrestle his devils, including gambling and drink, and resist an impulse to go off and photograph yet another war.

Meanwhile, Ingrid, trapped in a passionless marriage and with a seven-year-old daughter to bring up, must court scandal and risk compromising her Hollywood career and saintly reputation if their love is to survive. With their happiness and identities at stake, both Capa and Ingrid are presented with terrible choices.

### QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. On the drive home after Ingrid wins her first Academy Award, Petter asks her a pointed and somewhat cryptic question. He asks her, "You understand what this means?" What could Petter be insinuating, and why do you think the author, Chris Greenhalgh, inserted this tense scene so early on in the novel?
2. While Ingrid is at a Paris salon getting her hair done, she fantasizes about switching places with the hairdresser, and being "a normal citizen." What does this reveal about Ingrid's character and the cost of stardom?
3. Throughout the novel, many of the people Ingrid encounters pass judgment on her for leaving her young daughter, Pia, in Los Angeles while she is off in Paris. Do you share their concerns? Do you think modern, female celebrities are scrutinized in the same way or have times changed?



4. Greenhalgh chooses to use the third person for Ingrid and the first person for Capa. Why do you think he made this choice? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?
5. When Capa is taking Ingrid's photo during the parade to celebrate the Japanese surrender, he muses, "No matter how close I get or how partisan I am, things seen through the viewfinder seem to happen at one remove." What could this mean? How could this attitude serve Capa well, both in photographing Ingrid and in photographing wars?
6. Capa and Ingrid have their first real argument during the parade when Ingrid kisses a soldier, and Capa, overcome with jealousy, also kisses a parade-goer. What kind of insight into each of these characters does this scene provide? What is Greenhalgh subtly foreshadowing in this scene?
7. While in Paris, and several weeks into her affair with Capa, Ingrid's memories about a place in northern Denmark that she visited as a child are stirred. At this place, two seas violently and fantastically collide. How is this a metaphor for Ingrid and her current dilemma?
8. When Capa describes his experiences as a war photographer, he makes the important distinction that while the soldiers he photographs do not want to be on the battlefield, he's chosen war photography as a profession. He wonders if the soldiers see him as "some kind of vulture," "or a voyeur." Is war photography a form of voyeurism? Is Capa's profession necessary, and if so, why?
9. One particularly dramatic scene is when Capa and Ingrid attend the races at Longchamp. During the first race, they have a heated and emotional conversation about marriage. Why do you think Greenhalgh chose to have this conversation and the race play out simultaneously?
10. When Ingrid arrives home late after a long, frustrating day, Pia, elated to finally see her mother, rushes over and gives her a hug. Pia unknowingly leaves behind smears of chocolate on Ingrid's white dress, and for this, Ingrid slaps the little girl. Does seeing this side of Ingrid change your opinion of her? How do you think this moment affected Ingrid and the decision she makes soon after?
11. During the argument in which Petter asks Ingrid if she's been unfaithful, their conversation ends with Petter telling Ingrid that he loves her. Ingrid says in response, "What's that got to do with anything?" What does Ingrid mean by this? Do you agree with this sentiment?
12. While Capa is in the grip of his gambling addiction near the novel's end, he bets and subsequently loses all of his money. During his haze, he offers readers a compelling description of the momentum to losing in relation to gambling. To which other areas of Capa's life does this "the momentum of losing" apply?
13. After Capa's futile marriage proposal to Ingrid, he promises her that he won't fail her. She responds by saying, "Capa, you already have." Do you think this is a fair assessment? If so, in what ways has Capa failed Ingrid?
14. Near the novel's end, Ingrid receives a parcel from an unknown sender. Who do you think sent the box and what do you think was inside?

15. Ingrid discovers that Capa was killed by a landmine in Vietnam while reading a glowing review of her role as Joan of Arc in a newspaper. Why do you think Greenhalgh chose to reveal this crucial development in this way and then give us Capa's account of his own death? Was Capa's death unexpected or inevitable?

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**CHRIS GREENHALGH** is the prize-winning author of three volumes of poetry, a novel, and wrote the screenplay for *Coco Chanel & Igor Stravinsky*, which occupied the prestigious closing slot at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival. He lives with his wife and two sons in Sevenoaks, Kent, England.



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