
HARMONY BAY

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An adventurous slice of waterfront life where mystery surrounds history..

Tom Gahan



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“Tom Gahan’s first novel demonstrates his mastery of description. He layers the plight of a contemporary single parent with events of the American Revolution and weaves a tale that provides the essence of Harmony Bay...”

— Florence Gatto - Long Island Writers’ Guild,
author of *The Scent of Jasmine*

“Harmony Bay captures the scope of small town life...the way it should be.”

— Jerry Schaefer - WRCN 103.9 FM

“Very impressive. Hats off to you, Mr. Gahan!”

— Deborah E. Gordon - Sarasota, Florida

“Wow! What an attention grabber...from the very first page Harmony Bay captured my attention and didn’t let go...”

— Dominick J. Morreale, EdD -
author of *The Legend of Benny*

“Harmony Bay, a warm-hearted place...a riveting, heart-warming story.”

— Lisa A. Dabrowski - WLNG 92.1 FM,
author of *The Hunting Poetess*

“Getting to know the delightful characters of Harmony Bay makes me want to walk down the beach with any one of them and call them friend...Well done.”

— Caren Heacock - Southold, New York

“True escapism! ...Tom Gahan brings a fictional world to life in Harmony Bay, conjuring up images of the past, interwoven with a present day tale. His intimate portrayal of the characters comes through in a style that brings the reader into their lives as if they were kin...”

— Craig Romain – Editor, Lost Island Media

“Harmony Bay uncovers the rich historical past of a small town through the eyes of newcomers...Detailed description laced with historical references gives the reader a feel for life in a bayside town...”

— Kathy Gemmell - Frederick, Maryland

“Very interesting book...I’m glad that we were able to provide some scientific background...”

— Emerson Hasbrouck - Program Director,
Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program

“From swashbuckling adventure to witty humor to romance, Harmony Bay covers all of the bases.”

— Bob Mann – Tyler, Texas

For Christian
May your journey always be paved with harmony.

*A life in harmony with nature, the love of truth and virtue,
will purge the eyes to understanding her text.*

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Acknowledgements:

To my sister Eileen—*Eileen* was the first word that I spoke as a toddler. I guess that's where it all began. Thank you for all of the words herein that you inspired and for always being a faithful fan.

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Chapter 1

He stood frozen with his feet welded to the ground as if held in place by an unearthly power.

James McDonough never imagined this new place held such terror. He thought everything to be afraid of was left behind in the city. The fear to go out in the world and—the fear to be alone. Born and raised in the city, he knew its network of narrow alleys and bustling streets well. James used to live in the Old Section, a haphazard matrix of crookedly aligned streets lined with two-story brownstones. *Old Section* seemed appropriate to him, not so much because of the aged shops and dwellings, but its inhabitants. Everyone on James' block seemed prehistoric. He took it in stride and relied on the senior citizenry for their daily greetings called out to him from their hand washed front steps. They provided the occasional dollar or two that he earned for running errands for them up to the shops on the boulevard. 156 Avenue C is where he had lived for all of his days and nights. His grandparents gave his mom their home when they moved to Florida. She and James lived with Gram and Gramps until the icy winter winds that whistled through the city sapped the warmth from their bones for the last time, making the final determination for the move south. Although he missed his grandparents, everything seemed okay on Avenue C. That was his world.

This was his first day in a new place and he feared it was his last. Only the nearby sun-bleached beach grass bowed in reaction to the February gusts. In spite of the bitter cold, James felt a searing heat race throughout his skinny frame. Adrenalin pushed his pulse, making him

perspire beneath his down filled coat. Sweaty palms moistened his mittens, and worst of all, he felt tears begin to well in his eyes. The boy started to tremble, not from the cold, but from the horror before him. There were no shadows with the winter sun at its pinnacle. Everything appeared stark. Austere sand and sky were colorless. Dull red slats of snow fencing stood as pickets to the confrontation in sharp contrast to a scrim of decaying eelgrass and dirty snow. Drumming heartbeats in his ears blocked the sounds of coastal birds that wintered in the tidal wetlands behind him and erased the hushed lapping of smallish tide driven waves before him. At this very moment he wanted his mother, Gramps, or the ability to run. But not in that order. James had enough presence of mind to question if he should run if he could. He'd be overtaken in the first few yards and that would be the end of him.

It was an incredible beast. Soot black fur glistened in the midday sun. A watermelon head topped a massive and muscular frame. White, glistening teeth revealed themselves as the animal dropped its lower jaw. Its canines and incisors appeared even larger against the heavy, oily coat. The creature's front limbs were powerful and sturdy to support the substantial broad chest topped by solid shoulders. Hind legs were several times again thicker and more robust than the front. James had never seen anything like it in the city. It was huge. Now out on the coastal precipice of North America, James was certain he had encountered a bear. Welling tears started to trail down his stinging cheeks. He didn't cry out, but knew unless God or someone else intervened, he was a goner. A search party would never find his body. His mother would cry, being sorry that she traded the dangers of the Old Section for this sand bar and the marauding bears that roamed it looking for boys to eat.

The jackhammers in James' ears were loud enough to mask the sound of a distant voice calling from upwind. In the same instant, the hulking figure several yards in front of him reared up on its haunches and pawed the air with its enormous front feet. James had already slammed his eyes shut as an uncontrollable shaking replaced the tremor in his knees. While waiting for the monster to consume him—James pictured Mom, Gramps, and Gram.

Before closing his eyes James hadn't noticed the mop tail or the webbed toes on the animal and the barking didn't register with him as

belonging to the bear before him. The voice that had been too far off and too diminished by his state of panic was becoming audible, calling out, “Angus, Angus!” James felt something on his shoulder that he was sure was either the hand of the angel of death, or the mouth of the bear grabbing him. Now right beside him, the husky but melodic voice was loud and clear saying, “Boy! Boy, it is okay. Angus, you rascal. Sit down and behave. It looks like you have scared this young man. Angus. Angus!” Before James fainted, his eyes flickered long enough to see a barrel-chested man wearing a red parka and a long white beard.

James awoke in the arms of the old man who gently placed him on the cold sand, supporting him like a reed of beach grass. Speaking in a low voice, the man’s blue eyes were intense. “Well, lad, it looks like you have met Angus.” His billowing whiskers were unable to hide the gentle smile that went along with words reassuring James that everything was going to be okay. “Hmmm, it looks like the winds have caused your eyes to tear a bit. I assure you, you will be all right. It happens to me all the time.” He gave a knowing wink. “Welcome to Harmony Bay,” he said.