

EUROSTORM

ADVANCED READER COPY

PAYNE
HARRISON



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This book is for my daughter,

Gabrielle Mairin Harrison

An irresistible force . . . who also plays the viola!

Novels
by
Payne Harrison

Storming Intrepid

Thunder of Erebus

Black Cipher

Forbidden Summit

Eurostorm

Introduction

In Chicago, a travelling businessman is struck down dead in an intersection by a delivery truck.

In London, the financial district of Wellington Square is reduced to rubble by a massive bomb of unknown sponsorship.

These seemingly unrelated events are but way points for Chicago Police Captain Gideon Bloom as he travels to Geneva, and then London, in a quest to unravel the fabric of a mystery that is as sinister as it is unbelievable. A quest that becomes a race to storm the Eurostar bullet train as it races across France -- to a destination that could alter the world as we know it.



CHAPTER ONE

It all started with a pickpocket and a cigarette, and of all the incredible events that were to follow, it is nothing short of astonishing that the headwaters of it all flowed back to that singular confluence of the pickpocket and the cigarette on that Chicago street one April morning.

It was on Michigan Street to be exact, near the Drake Hotel. He stepped out of the elevator, hardly distinguishable from the legions of traveling businessmen who slept in the elegant landmark on any given night. He was a shade taller than his peers, and later when the police canvassed the hotel one young woman – a brand manager for Frito-Lay, up from Dallas for the night -- recalled seeing him the night before in the hotel health club as he maintained a sweaty pace on the treadmill like any trim, health conscious executive.

Leaving the elevator he strode through the posh lobby and entered the hotel gift shop where Beatrix the cashier was filing down a broken nail between customers.

“Antihistamines?” came the question.

Beatrix looked up from her nails and into an unforgiving

face that was framed by sandy-colored hair laced with gray -- and a set of ghostly eyes made her shudder as though she'd felt a draft from the undertaker's wind.

"I said, do you have any antihistamines? The spring pollen seems to be playing havoc with my sinuses."

Beatrice would later recall that although his English was flawless, he possessed an accent, although from where she couldn't say. But it was the timbre of his voice that induced her to slide off her stool to inspect the health and beauty aids aisle for some packaged sinus relief. A quick scan made her turn and say, with apology, "I'm afraid we're all out, sir. But there's a pharmacy three blocks down and two over on Michigan."

With effort the customer reined in his contempt for the inefficiency and incompetence of the woman and inquired, "An *apoteke*? Er, a pharmacy you say?"

"Yes, sir. Out the door and to your right. Three blocks, then left two. A Walgreen's. You can't miss it."

There was a curt nod of the head and a "Thank you." Then he spun on his heel and left to recross the lobby and then out the revolving door. The doorman offered to get him a cab but he declined, thinking that a brisk walk would help defuse the excitement building within him, as one required a clear head for matters such as these. He would purchase the antihistamines, then hail a taxi for his trip, and in anticipation he reached into his breast pocket and extracted a map of Chicago and vicinity. He inspected it carefully for a moment, his chest thumping rapidly, then he took a deep breath, refolded the map and replaced it in the inside breast pocket of his suit jacket. It was a clear, crisp morning, for a late season cool front had spilled down from Canada to whip up whitecaps on Lake Michigan. In response, the Chicagoans had pulled out their overcoats and mufflers for a final

wearing before the genuine onset of spring. The foreigner was no exception, but he was accustomed to colder climes so he wore his vicuna coat open, making his pricey tailored clothes something of a neon sign to the Bolivians.

The Bolivians were a subculture of the pervasive gang phenomenon that the Chicago ghettos had offered up, most of their number coming illegally into the country with no money and dim prospects, forcing many to cross to the other side of the law to scabble out an existence. While other ghettos pursued drugs, prostitution, protection or numbers to carve out their sustenance, the Bolivian gangs had curiously staked out the arcane art of pick pocketing as the means to underwrite their toehold in the hostile environs of Chicago's south side.

The foreigner had halted at the intersection across from the Walgreen's when a young Bolivian woman brushed past him, pressing a pair of meaty, torpedo shaped breasts into his ribcage. The bump and momentary sexual distraction gave her accomplice the split second he required to reach inside his jacket and deftly remove the alligator wallet laden with cash and credit cards. The young woman pulled back, batted her round black eyes at him with a "*Compermiso*," and then was lost in the sea of foot traffic going the other way. The distraction delayed his crossing Michigan Avenue, putting him in the caboose position of the pedestrians surging through the crosswalk, and it was then that the cigarette came into play.

The driver of the *Windy City Delivery Service* Toyota pickup was smoking in the cab against company regulations, but since the heater wasn't working he felt entitled. He'd taken a long drag, extending the red flame on the tip when – as cigarettes are wont to do – the flame fell off, dropped between his legs and caught in a fold of the fabric to execute

a spot weld on his penis.

Involuntarily he lurched in his seat, stomping on the accel-erator when he should have been braking, which launched his pickup into the intersection like an unguided missile. The Toyota's right headlight caught the foreigner gut high, com-pressing his internal organs and sending him through the air with twelve hundred foot pounds of pressure where he rebounded off the grill of a FedEx truck passing crossways through the intersection. Aghast, the FedEx driver slammed on the brakes to send him to the asphalt where his skull met the pavement with a sickening *Smack!*



CHAPTER TWO

The mammoth bells that hung in the gothic clock tower known as Big Ben tolled their noon hour refrain, sending their peals up and down the Thames and scattering the dozing pigeons from the belfry. The sound waves wafted over Trafalgar Square, where the one armed statue of Horatio Nelson stood like sentinel atop its imposing column. But by the time the peals reached the epicenter of the City's financial district their impact had dissipated, like the ripples of a pond, lost in the din of traffic as bustling office workers poured into Wellington Square in search of lunch.

He stepped out of The Exchange building a bit tentative at first, wondering whether or not he should have brought his overcoat, but the sun had broken through to warm the square and send the morning chill packing, transforming a gray day into a glorious spring experience. Andrew Price trotted down the steps of The Exchange, flushed with the exhilaration that comes from turning a profit of £132,000 in the course of a single morning.

Price was of medium height, a bit shy of his thirtieth

birthday, and his Saville Row suit hung nicely on his slender frame. His dark hair was cut a bit moppish, but he'd done away with his thick glasses and replaced them with contact lenses, allowing his angular features to project a more rakish image.

In most every respect it could be said that Andrew Price had it made. The son of a postal worker, he'd shown early on he was something of a prodigy with numbers, and academic honors flowed from him like a stream. After Oxford he'd gone on to graduate third in his class from the London Business School where he was courted by the elite of British industry. But Andrew Price had passed on corporate positions or employment with the larger merchant banks. Instead, he came to roost in a boutique trading firm on Threadneedle Street where he could exercise his flair for riding the market. Indeed, it would be fair to say that less than a dozen men and no more than few women in the City had as steely a grasp of the arcane world of derivatives, arbitrage and reverse straddles as Andrew Price, and every one in the Exchange knew it. So along with the prestige of being a youthful high flyer came the bennies -- the Saville Row tailor, the spacious flat over-looking the Thames, the BMW roadster. Yes, life was nearly as perfect as it could be for the son of a man who'd carried the Royal Mail.

Price was turning his head to follow a flash of red hair and a pair of killer legs crossing the square at quick time when a voice boomed behind him with, "Andrew! . . . Andrew! Wait a moment!"

Price turned to see Arthur Topping descend the Exchange steps. Topping was managing director of Topping, Hereford & Weeks, the firm that employed Price, and in your mind's eye he fit the image of a wealthy managing director like a spandex glove -- graying hair, mustache, with an aristocrat's

face and a gold watch chain at the waist coat. As he approached Price he absolutely gushed with excitement. "Andrew! I must say you were an absolute wizard with that straddle this morning. No! Not a wizard. An artist! Your trading is nothing less than sheer artistry."

Andrew might have been a modest grandson. "All in a day's work, Arthur."

"Rubbish, and you know it. That will be a hefty check you'll collect at the end of this quarter, but until then are you on for lunch?"

"I'm yours if you want me, Arthur."

"Aren't you the puckish one. My car's coming round. Join me at the Carlton Club."

Andrew was truly content as he replied, "Delighted, Arthur. Delighted."

The Daimler limousine pulled in front of the Vauxhall sedan parked at the curb across from the Lord Mayor's house. The uniformed chauffeur popped out and opened the passenger door as Topping and Price leisurely made their way across Wellington Square towards him. He glanced at the driverless Vauxhall with a silent *tut-tut*, knowing it would soon be towed for trespassing on a no parking zone. Then his employer and the young protégé reached him. Andrew Price had just glanced at his Rolex, taking note of the time before he stepped into the Daimler. It was the last conscious thought he had before the Vauxhall convulsed in a giant fulmination, sending a shock wave across Wellington Square like some invisible sledgehammer that flattened everything in its path; and turning the gleaming office towers into a waterfall of glass that fell without mercy upon the dead and the dying.

Gideon Bloom emerged from the J Street metro station, as he had for the better part of the last half-century, and walked the half block to enter a grim, gray granite structure that possessed all the elegance of a prison in disrepair. He was a tall and slender man with a military moustache that had turned more salt than pepper -- the only decoration on a countenance that imparted a flint-like disposition. He wore a navy blue trench coat with a battered Fedora and there was the trace of a stoop to his shoulders that betrayed his sixty-seven years.

He entered the front entrance of the pillbox structure that was Chicago Police Headquarters and walked past the paunchy desk sergeant, then continued on by the display cases filled with shields of officers who had fallen in the line of duty. The desk sergeant shot him a glance that was equal parts grudging respect and contempt, while Bloom regarded the sergeant as he did all rear area bureaucratic hangers-on -- with distaste.

He took the elevator to the fifth floor where the doors opened to the undercurrent buzz of a police station awakening to a new day. Bloom walked past the Chief of Detectives suite to a cubby hole office at the end of the hall. He unlocked the door, which had the words SPECIAL PROJECTS stenciled on the opaque glass, and entered. It was a small, windowless enclave with nothing more than a metal desk, file cabinet, bookcase and coat rack. He doffed the Fedora from his bald head, then hung up his trench coat and sports jacket, revealing the .38 Colt Special on his belt holster that had become an adjunct part of his anatomy. A moment later a prim, middle-aged woman stuck her head in the door, asking, "Coffee, Captain?"

Bloom didn't smile much, but he smiled at her and replied, "Black like coal, Mildred, if you please."

It was their standard repartee, and she said, “Right away, Captain.”

Mildred had typed his memos, fetched his coffee, and clucked over him for the better part of a quarter century – and she was the only secretary who could actually decipher his handwriting and brew his coffee just the right shade of ink.

Bloom sat down in the creaky swivel chair that seemed contoured to his behind and glanced at the *Sun-Times*, turning the corners of his mouth down at the headline that the Blackhawks had been knocked out of the playoffs. Then Mildred brought his coffee and he tossed the paper aside to take a long deep pull of the brew.

Gideon Bloom had retired from the Chicago Police Department twelve years ago as a Captain of Internal Affairs with his pension, a reputation, and two bullet holes in the back, placed there by a fellow officer he later placed on a long hiatus at government expense.

Bloom had become a policeman because he felt a calling to put criminals behind bars. He seemed gifted in that regard, if not obsessed, as he rose rapidly through the ranks, displaying an instinct for those quirky cases where things were never quite what they seemed. Indeed, Bloom’s calling was so com-pelling that ultimately his idealistic wave had to crash upon the corrupted rocks of the department, and he had to choose – i.e. protect the brotherhood of policemen or uphold the law. As a young rookie he never expected the law and the police to part company, but he came to learn that the lucre-tive realities of drugs and money turned that divergence into a chasm.

That the Windy City had a legacy of graft from Alphonse Capone onward was manifest, and when Bloom was forty-two, the realities of corruption in the Chicago Police weighed

heavily upon him. So when he was approached by the Feds to participate in a sting operation against the drug elements of the Chicago police, he reluctantly agreed. Twenty prosecutions later, the department was shaken to its foundation and Bloom became a celebrity of sorts, but also a marked man. The politicians, of course, were caught in a bind. If they branded Bloom a traitor to the force by working with the Feds, then they themselves -- rightly or wrongly -- would also be viewed as corrupt. So they embraced him and elevated him to the post of Deputy Chief for Internal Affairs.

A pariah's way station.

He threw dirty cops in jail for the next thirteen years before retiring at fifty-five. Then a short time passed before he was summoned back as a "special consultant" by the Commissioner's Office because, at the end of the day, Bloom was a phenomenal detective. To convict policemen he had to be, for policemen were the slipperiest of criminals.

In the vein of detective work, Chicago was a metropolis large enough to generate that thread of distilled evil that seemed to infect big cities. An evil that manifested itself rarely, but horrifically, in crimes that churned the stomach and shuddered the soul. They usually did not splash in the papers because their victims were camouflaged in Chicago's nightly body count, and the politicians knew it was best to keep that kind of press off the grid. These were the cases that had become dragons for the aging knight to slay.

Bloom locked his door, then went to his file cabinet and spun the combination lock on the top drawer. He withdrew three files and placed them on his desk, side by side. He again sipped on his coffee and opened the first, marked HOMICIDE, then methodically read the contents for the twentieth time, looking for that subtle link or heretofore unnoticed thread that could bring the macabre picture into

focus. Over the last eight months, four prostitutes on the South Side had been found stabbed in various alleyways and tenements. In and of itself, this was not terribly unusual in the drug-laced battlefield of Chicago's southern venue; but what was atypical was that the stab wounds were not stab wounds, per se, like with a butcher knife or a stiletto. Forensics had established the weapon had been a surgeon's scalpel that had expertly entered under the sternum and deftly punctured the left ventricle. Then as a signature, the killer had sliced off certain body parts. The coroner's report stated the sternum incision had been expertly done, as had the removal operation.

Bloom read the profiler's report again and found the killer's resumé both fascinating and repugnant. He was a highly educated male, single, probably middle-aged, devoted to his profession, and was sexually inadequate. Probably had an encounter with a prostitute in his late adolescence or early manhood and was laughed out of the bedchamber. Never forgave. Never forgot. A human inferno of rage ever since. Most likely fastidious in his personal habits and intolerant of mistakes in colleagues and subordinates.

Bloom put the file aside. He'd been through a computer sort of the Cook County medical society and fourteen surgeons matched the initial cut. Discreet inquiries revealed three who verbally abused their staff and colleagues, and they were under surveillance. Bloom's instincts told him they would collar him soon, although another hooker would likely bite the dust before that happened. A blood lust was never satisfied.

Bloom drew the next file toward him, marked CORONER'S OFFICE. The victims here were six months in the past, but the case was even more chilling than the Ripper surgeon. Within a twelve-hour period the previous fall, three gay men

had been admitted to separate hospitals complaining of high fever and chills. All of them were dead within twenty-four hours. The autopsy results had been nothing less than ghoulish, for the victims had been at three separate gay bars the night before, yet had been infected by one of the most deadly microbes in existence --- bubonic plague.

The Commissioner and the Mayor had put the arm on the coroner to issue a report stating the men died from “AIDS related complications” despite their robust health, and hide the fact that in one evening some demon had visited three gay bars in Chicago and somehow had managed to put them in contact with bubonic plague. There had been no victims before and -- the Almighty be praised -- none since, but the covert investigation had turned up nothing, so the case had landed on Bloom’s desk.

The forensics people said that somehow the victims had been placed in contact with an infected flea, for the way the disease killed millions during the Black Death in Europe was that fleas would drink the blood of infected rats, then bite humans. Death came within hours. The lab’s best guess was that somehow the perpetrator transported a live infected rat as the host. Fleas were introduced to bite it, then they were collected. A single flea was then segregated into a small vial the size of a capsule – then the vial was left open on the bar, allowing the flea to escape and hop on a wrist of an unsuspecting patron.

As Thomas Edison once said, “Genius is ten percent inspiration and ninety percent perspiration.” So it was with detective work. Since about the only place plague naturally occurred these days was in prairie dog and armadillo populations -- neither of which frequented Chicago gay bars -- Bloom started with the list from the Army’s chemical warfare branch and the Center for Disease Control detailing

where bubonic plague could be had. There were only a dozen facilities in the country where that sort of thing could be obtained, assuming it had come from a domestic facility. Bloom had obtained a computer list of all active employees of those facilities. Then, playing a hunch, he made discreet phone calls to the chiefs of police of major cities across the country, inquiring if any plague-like deaths had shown up on their radar and been hushed up. He scored. Two in Seattle and one in Miami. Then he got a computer list from the airlines of all traffic in and out of Seattle, Miami, and Chicago near the dates of the murders; compared them to the employee lists and --- BINGO! A man named Dentwiler who worked for a biotech firm in the San Francisco Bay Area had been at all three locations on the dates in question. He was under surveillance and his home would be searched in a couple of days with a covert warrant. Again, it was only a matter of time until he was run to ground.

Bloom put the file aside and pulled open the third one marked INTERNAL AFFAIRS. He grumbled and opened the folder to the familiar story of a dirty cop. A lieutenant in Narcotics had a picturesque family in a picturesque split level in Wheaton. He also had paid cash for a Lakeshore high-rise condo where he'd installed a mistress with a paid-for-in-cash Lexus. Surveillance was in place, along with wire taps on his home, condo, and cell phones. If he was on the druggie's take, he'd get careless eventually and Bloom would toss another one onto the slag heap. He was reaching for the phone to call his contact at Internal Affairs to learn if the taps had yielded anything overnight when it rang. He picked it up and grunted, "Bloom."

The voice was tense. "Gid? It's Sammy. Need you upstairs. Right away. My office."

"Be there in a few minutes."

Bloom locked up the files, put on his jacket, and headed for the staircase to take him to the department's executive level, wondering why Deputy Superintendent Samuel Bracewell had summoned him.

Before Bloom had left the brotherhood of police for Internal Affairs, he'd been a lieutenant in Vice when a newly-minted detective named Samuel Bracewell had landed in his division. Bracewell had it all -- polish, brains, college degree, and an ambition that was always in afterburner. He could have easily joined the FBI, but he'd chosen the department. His police instincts weren't bad, but his political instincts were stellar. He had a politically-correct attorney wife and they were constantly attending political soirées for various aldermen. Bloom came to rely on Bracewell, not so much for his police work but for his paperwork. He could generate, file, copy, and track the Byzantine paper requirements of the department like no other. Bloom was appreciative and took Bracewell under his wing, letting him take credit for a couple of high profile collars -- knowing that while press ink was something that he avoided, it was something that Sammy coveted.

Just before Bloom rotated into Internal Affairs, he'd seen Bracewell promoted to the youngest lieutenant in the department. After that, Sammy's career continued to rise as Bloom went on to cleansing the force. Then, to both their surprises, their paths crossed. Bracewell was on the cusp of being made Captain of the Vice Squad, a steppingstone to greater things, when Bloom heard Sammy's voice on a wiretap.

It was a high-priced, top-tier call girl ring. Five grand a night to well-heeled clients, a totally professional Mafia operation. Sammy had led the investigation personally, and to everyone's befuddlement, it seemed to drag on and on. Then Bloom caught a call from the Feds' organized crime

strike force. Seems Bracewell's voice had turned up on a tap. It was in the bedchamber of the Mafia chieftain's personal gal pal. In a secure room in the Federal Building, Bloom listened to his one-time protégé delve into the moist depths of the Mafia hooker, all the while declaring his undying love.

Red-faced with rage, Bloom set the headphones aside and said to the Fed, "I'll get back to you."

He snagged Bracewell that evening as he was walking from his car to his house. Bloom drove up to the curb and ordered, "Get in."

Bracewell's body language was like that of a prisoner caught in the spotlight, and he meekly complied. Bloom drove to a deserted school yard and roughly hauled Sammy out, proceeding to slap him as hard as he could, shouting, "*How stupid are you going to be!? What are you doing, screwing a don's piece!? You're the Captain of Vice, for Chrissake!*"

Bracewell fell to his knees, sobbing incoherently that he had fallen in love with the woman and couldn't control himself. Bloom, who could summon up a brimstone delivery when the occasion required it, put his face to Bracewell's and told him what to do or he'd put him in a cold dark hole for the rest of his life. Then he turned and left.

The next day, the news cameras played the big roll-up of a prostitution and pornography ring by the Chicago PD, including a Mafia don and his consorts. Shortly thereafter, stories began leaking to the press about the "heroic" exploits of Captain Samuel Bracewell who literally went undercover to nail the ringleaders. His wife was portrayed with equally heroic prose as she lamented that her husband's work was dirty and dangerous, and he had bedded the don's concubine with her consent in order to bust the ring.

Sammy's career took off like a rocket after that, rising to

Assistant Superintendent for Criminal Investigation, then Deputy Superintendent. Bloom knew he was a shoo-in for Police Superintendent if he could avoid another blunder.

He walked down the hall and entered the executive suite of the PS. The prim, efficient secretary looked up from her word processor and smiled. "Hello, Captain. He's expecting you. You can go right in."

"Thanks," replied Bloom, and he walked into the Deputy Super's lair. Behind the oversized desk in the oversized office sat Sammy in a tailored suit his wife's money probably paid for. He rose and said, "Hello, Gid. I think you know Max."

Bloom extended his hand. "Sure. How you doing these days, Max?"

"Not bad, Gideon. Yourself?"

"Still looking for retirement."

A chuckle. "Aren't we all."

Max Cheshire was Deputy Special Agent in Charge for the FBI in Chicago. Rotund, thick-necked, and a former defensive tackle for Fordham, he was often called the Cheshire Cat for his ever present grin, but Bloom noticed he wasn't smiling now.

Bloom knew Cheshire was nobody's fool and accorded him the proper respect. Then he turned and nodded to the second man sitting across from Bracewell and said, "Hello, Leon."

The man nodded, "Gideon."

Leon McGuinness was head of the department's crime lab, a rail-thin man with a bald head and wire-framed glasses who was constantly fidgety as though he were uncomfortable in his own skin. Bloom didn't care much for McGuinness, but his work product was always solid.

Bloom took a seat. "So what's going down?"

Bracewell grunted. "Always to the point, aren't you, Gid?"

Well, let's cut to it, shall we? Seems a John Doe hit the morgue ten days ago. Got himself splattered in a crosswalk on Michigan Avenue by an out-of-control delivery truck."

"No I.D.?" asked Bloom.

Bracewell nodded to McGuinness who opened a file and picked up the narrative. "Victim was a male Caucasian, very well dressed in clothes with European labels. No wallet on him but the Bolivians have been working that area and we figured his wallet was lifted just before he got nailed."

McGuinness passed across a black and white photograph of the victim, naked from the shoulders up. Bloom thought he looked like a middle-aged man caught napping, except that part of his skull was caved in. He shrugged, "So?"

McGuinness continued. "Two things happened. We ran the prints through the IDFS system and came up with zip. But because the labels in his clothes were European, we filed an Interpol search request through the Feds."

Bracewell cut in. "While this was going on, we had some blue shirts canvass the nearby hotels with his photo. Seems we came up with a match. The Doe's name was Erich Stoltz, Assistant Managing Director of Bernese Laboratories, a pharmaceutical firm based in Geneva."

Cheshire cleared his throat and chimed in, "However, the print request had already been fired off to Interpol headquarters in Lyon."

There was a pause, causing Bloom to prompt, "And?"

The three men exchanged glances, then Bracewell said, "His prints came back with an I.D. -- a perfect match, in fact. The prints say this John Doe ain't no Erich Stoltz of Geneva, Switzerland."

"So who then?"

Cheshire shifted his weight. He definitely wasn't smiling now as he said, as evenly as he could, "The prints came back

as those belonging to an *SS Standartenführer* – one named Otto von Spinnemann, who was executed by hanging at Karlsruhe prison on August 7, 1947, in accordance with his death sentence handed down by the Allied War Crimes Tribunal at Nüremberg.”