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THE DIAMOND BROTHERS IN...

The French Confection

AND

The Greek Who
Stole Christmas

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by Anthony Horowitz

The Devil and His Boy

Groosham Grange

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The Switch

More Bloody Horowitz

The Diamond Brothers books:

The Falcon's Malteser

Public Enemy Number Two

South by South East

The Blurred Man

The French Confection

I Know What You Did Last Wednesday

The Greek who Stole Christmas

THE DIAMOND BROTHERS IN...

The French Confection
AND

The Greek Who
Stole Christmas

ANTHONY HOROWITZ



WALKER
BOOKS

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TIM DIAMOND INC.
23 THE CUTTING, CAMDEN TOWN, NW1

Dear Reader,

It's been a while since I had lunch with the chairman of Walker Books. He's an old man now. Most of his hair's gone white and the rest of it's just gone. He wears bi-focal glasses but he doesn't really need them. He's forgotten how to read. He'd forget his own name if it wasn't written on his Zimmer frame.

And yet I still remember the day he took me out – just the two of us, face to face, though with a face like his I wouldn't have bothered. We met at the poshest restaurant in London ... then crossed the road to the café on the other side. He ordered two bacon sandwiches without the bacon. He was a vegetarian. And that was when he tried to sweet-talk me into writing an introduction for this collection of stories. But it takes more than a bag of sweets to get Tim Diamond on your side, so I told Walker to take a walk.

A few days later he came tiptoeing round my flat with a bag of books: a bit like Santa Claus without the beard, the laughter or (it was the middle of June) Christmas. This was his deal. Three dozen adventures of Maisy mouse and an old Where's Wally? annual in return for a couple of pages by me. But as far as I was concerned, there was still one book missing. The Walker cheque book ... preferably autographed. Unfortunately, when I pointed this out, the chairman just scowled. That was the sort of man he was: small, hard-edged and leathery. Just like his chair.

"I need an introduction!" he cried.

"All right. How do you do, I'm Tim Diamond," I said.

"No, no, no. For the book!"

"Why do you need an introduction?" Nick – my kid brother – asked. "You probably won't sell any copies anyway."

Actually, in the end, it was Nick who talked me into writing this. He reminded me it's only thanks to Walker that I've become known as England's sharpest, most successful private eye, the sort of detective that makes Hercule Poirot look like a short Belgian with a funny moustache! I have to admit that Walker have been behind me all the way. About thirty miles behind me.

They launched this book with a slap-up dinner at the Ritz. The service was so slow, the waiters deserved to be slapped. Twelve journalists came, but only eleven left. That was how bad the food was.

At the same time, they launched a major advertising campaign ... it's amazing how much you can achieve with three toilet walls and a can of spray paint. Soon the name of Tim Daimond was everywhere. Spelling was never their strong suit. And what can I say about the new covers? They'd been specially designed to stop people noticing the new price. But it was the same old paper though and for that matter the same old stories. They were written so long ago that the Domesday Book was two ahead of them in the bestseller lists, and frankly it had better jokes.

Anyway, here's the introduction. I'm not quite sure how to begin. Introducing the introduction is always the hardest part. I'm glad I'm not a writer. And if you met the guy who does the writing for me, you'd be glad too.

His name is Anthony Horowitz – and I use him to put my adventures down on paper. Let me tell

you a bit about him. A lot of people have compared him to JK Rowling. They say he's not as good. He has a wife, two sons, a stuffed dog and a word processor, and the word processor is the only one that doesn't want to leave home. You ever see "Foyle's War", "Midsomer Murders" or "Collision" on TV? Me neither – but he wrote them all. They're the only programmes people fast-forward through to see the advertisements. He also writes a lot of books. About thirty of them at the last count. Enough books to immobilise a mobile library.

I met him just after I'd cracked the case that became known as "The Falcon's Malteser". I don't think his career was doing too well just then. How many other writers tap-dance outside Harrods in their spare time? Anyway, I told him my story, he began to write – and the rest was history. Actually, nobody wanted history. They wanted an adventure. So he had to write it a second time. But it worked. "The Falcon's Malteser" sold twenty-seven copies in Waterstone's the day it was published and I only bought twenty-six of them. Soon we were right at number one in the Bookseller chart. OK – it was the remainders chart but you've got to start somewhere. "The Times" critic said the book was "hysterical" and she should know.

Since then, I've cracked more cases than the entire baggage-handling department at Heathrow Airport, and Horowitz has written them all. "Public Enemy Number Two", "South by South East" – one day maybe he'll come up with a title that somebody actually understands. I had a pretty hairy time in Australia recently and he says that'll come out in a book too. Apparently the title is going to be: "The Radius of the Lost Shark".

Which brings me to the book you are now holding in your hand (unless you didn't buy it, in which case it's still on the shelf ... a bit like my editor).

The two stories in this book all happened to me in the space of one year and all I can say is, I'm glad it wasn't a leap year. One extra day would have been the death of me.

Why do so many people want to kill me? I could have been plastered all over Paris in "The French Confection". And as for "The Greek Who Stole Christmas" ... well, next year I'm giving that particular holiday season a miss. Tinsel, turkeys and gift-wrapped hand grenades? No thanks.

You may have noticed that this edition is printed on special cheap paper and as for the glue ... all I can say is, don't leave it out in the sun. The book is also carbon neutral. A forest in Norway was cut down to produce it but the good news is that another one was planted ... in England. The Norwegians have got too many anyway. You might like to know, ten per cent of every copy sold goes to a very worthwhile charity. Me. I have an overdraft and a hungry kid brother to support.

One last thing. Remember that this book comes with a MONEY BACK GUARANTEE. If for any reason you don't like it, Walker guarantee they won't give you back your money.

All the best,

Tim Diamond



THE FRENCH CONFECTION

THE FRENCH FOR MURDER

Everybody loves Paris. There's an old guy who even wrote a song about it. "I love Paris in the springtime...", that's how it goes. Well, all I can say is, he obviously never went there with my big brother, Tim. I did – and it almost killed me.

It all started with a strawberry yoghurt.

It was a French strawberry yoghurt, of course, and it was all we had in the fridge for breakfast. Tim and I tossed a coin to decide who'd get the first mouthful. Then we tossed the coin to see who'd keep the coin. Tim won both times. So there I was sitting at the breakfast table chewing my nails, which was all I had to chew, when Tim suddenly let out a great gurgle and started waving his spoon in the air like he was trying to swat a fly.

"What is it, Tim?" I asked. "Don't tell me! You've found a strawberry!"

“No, Nick! Look...!”

He was holding up the silver foil that he'd just torn off the yoghurt carton and looking at it, and now I understood. The company that made the yoghurt was having one of those promotions. You've probably seen them on chocolate bars or crisps or Coke cans. These days you can't even open a can of beans without finding out if you've won a car or a holiday in Mexico or a cheque for a thousand pounds. Personally, I'm just grateful if I actually find some beans. Anyway, the yoghurt people were offering a whole range of prizes and there it was, written on the underside of the foil.

*Congratulations from Bestlé Fruit Yoghurts! You
have just won a weekend for two in Paris!
Just telephone the number printed on the carton
for further details and ... Bon Voyage!*

“I've won, Nick!” Tim gasped. “A weekend for two...!” He stopped and bit his thumb. “Who shall I take?” he muttered.

“Oh thanks a lot, Tim,” I said. “It was me who bought the yoghurt.”

“But it was my money.”

“If it hadn't been for me, you'd have spent it on a choc-ice.”

Tim scowled. “But Paris, Nick! It's the most romantic city in Europe. I want to take my girlfriend.”

“Tim,” I reminded him. “You haven’t got a girlfriend.”

That was a bit cruel of me. The truth was, Tim hadn’t been very lucky in love. His first serious relationship had ended tragically when his girlfriend had tried to murder him. After that he’d replied to one of those advertisements in the lonely hearts column of a newspaper, but he can’t have read it properly because the girl had turned out to be a guy who spent the evening chasing him round Paddington station. His last girlfriend had been a fire eater in a local circus. He’d taken her out for a romantic, candlelit dinner but she’d completely spoiled it by eating the candles. Right now he was on his own. He sometimes said he felt like a monk – but without the haircut or the religion.

Anyway, we argued a bit more but finally he picked up the telephone and rang the number on the yoghurt carton. There was no answer.

“That’s because you’ve telephoned the sell-by date,” I told him. I turned the carton over. “This is the number here...”

And that was how, three weeks later, we found ourselves standing in the forecourt at Waterloo station. Tim was carrying the tickets. I was carrying the bags. It had been more than a year since we’d been abroad – that had been to Amsterdam on the trail of the mysterious assassin known as Charon – and that time we

had gone by ferry. Tim had been completely seasick even before he reached the sea. I was relieved that this time we were going by train, taking the Channel Tunnel, although with Tim, of course, you never knew.

We took the escalator down to the international terminal. Ahead of us, the tunnel was waiting: a thirty-two mile stretch linking England and France, built at a cost of twelve billion pounds.

"You have to admit," Tim said. "It's an engineering marvel."

"That's just what I was thinking," I said.

"Yes. It's a fantastic escalator. And so much faster than going down the stairs..."

We had two seats next to each other right in the middle of one of the carriages. The train was pretty full and soon we were joined by two other passengers opposite us. They were both travelling alone. The first was from Texas – you could tell just from his hat. He was chewing an unlit cigar (this was a non-smoking compartment) and reading a magazine: *International Oil*. The other passenger was a very old lady with white hair and skin so wrinkled I was amazed it managed to stay on. I wasn't sure if she had huge eyes or extremely powerful spectacles but every time she looked at me I thought I was about to be hit by a pair of grey and white golf balls. I looked out of the window. The platform was already empty,

sweeping in a graceful curve beneath the great glass canopy. Somewhere a door slammed.

The train left exactly on time at ten minutes past ten. There was no whistle. No announcement. I wouldn't have known we had moved if it hadn't been for the slight shudder – and even that was Tim, not the train. He was obviously excited.

About an hour later there was an announcement on the intercom and we dipped into the tunnel carved out underneath the sea. That was a non-event too. A car-park, a sign advertising hamburgers, a white cement wall and suddenly the outside world disappeared to be replaced by rushing blackness. So this was the engineering miracle of the last century? As far as Eurostar was concerned, it was just a hole in the ground.

Tim had been ready with his camera and now he drew back, disappointed. “Is this it?” he demanded.

I looked up from my book. “What were you expecting, Tim?” I asked.

“I thought this train went under water!” Tim sighed. “I wanted to take some pictures of the fish!”

The other passengers had heard this and somehow it broke the silence. The old lady had been knitting what looked like a multi-coloured sack but now she looked up. “I love taking the train,” she announced, and for the

first time I realized that she was French. Her accent was so thick you could have wrapped yourself in it to keep warm.

"It sure is one hell of a thing," the Texan agreed. "London to Paris in three and a half hours. Great for business."

The Texan held up his magazine. "I'm in oil. Jed Mathis is the name."

"Why do you call your oil Jed Mathis?" Tim asked.

"I'm sorry?" Jed looked confused. He turned to the old lady. "Are you visiting your grandchildren in Paris?" he asked.

"Non!" the lady replied.

Tim dug into his pocket and pulled out a French dictionary. While he was looking up the word, she continued in English.

"I have a little cake shop in Paris. Erica Nice. That's my name. Please, you must try some of my almond slices." And before anyone could stop her, she'd pulled out a bag of cakes which she offered to us all.

We were still hurtling through the darkness. Tim put away his dictionary and helped himself. At the same time, a steward approached us, pushing one of those trolleys piled up with sandwiches and coffee. He was a thin, pale man with a drooping moustache and slightly sunken eyes. The name on his badge was Marc Chabrol. I remember thinking even then that he looked nervous. A nervous traveller, I thought.

But then, why would a nervous traveller work on a train?

Jed produced a wallet full of dollars and offered to buy us all coffee. A free breakfast and we hadn't even arrived. Things were definitely looking up.

"So what do you do?" Erica Nice asked, turning to Tim.

Tim gave a crooked smile. It was meant to make him look smart but in fact he just looked as though he had toothache. "I'm a private detective," he said.

The steward dropped one of the coffee cups. Fortunately, he hadn't added the water yet. Coffee granules showered over the KitKats.

"A private detective?" Erica trilled. "How very unusual!"

"Are you going to Paris on business?" the Texan asked.

Now of course the answer was "no". We were on holiday. Tim hadn't had any business for several weeks and even then he had only been hired to find a missing dog. In fact he had spent three days at Battersea Dogs' Home where he had been bitten three times – twice by dogs. The trouble was, though, he was never going to admit this. He liked to think of himself as a man of mystery. So now he winked and leaned forward. "Just between you and me," he drawled, "I'm on a case." Yes. A nutcase, I thought. But he went on.

“I’ve been hired by Interplop.”

“You mean Interpol,” the Texan said.

“The International Police,” Tim agreed. “It’s a top-secret case. It’s so secret, they don’t even know about it at the top. In other words...” He gestured with his almond slice, spraying Jed with crumbs, “...a case for Tim Diamond.”

The steward had obviously heard all this. As he put down the first cup of coffee, his hands were shaking so much that the liquid spilled over the table. His face had been pale to begin with. Now it had no colour at all. Even his moustache seemed to have faded.

“Where are you staying in Paris?” the old lady asked.

“It’s a hotel called The Fat Greek,” Tim said.

“Le Chat Gris,” I corrected him. It was French for “grey cat” and this was the name of the hotel where Bestlé Yoghurts had booked us in for three nights.

The name seemed to have an electric effect on the steward. I’d been watching him out of the corner of my eye and actually saw him step backwards, colliding with the trolley. The bottles and cans shook. Two packets of gingerbread biscuits rocketed onto the floor. The man was terrified. But why?

“Paris is so beautiful in the spring,” the old lady said. She’d obviously seen the effect that

Tim was having on the steward and perhaps she was trying to change the subject before the poor man had a heart attack. "You must make sure you take a stroll on the Champs Elysées ... if you have the time."

"How much do I owe you for the coffee?" the American asked.

"Four euros, monsieur..." The steward reached down and picked up the biscuits. The way he took the money and moved off, he could have been trying to get to Paris ahead of the train. I guessed he wanted to get away from us as fast as he could. And I was right. He didn't even stop to offer anyone else in the carriage a coffee. He simply disappeared. Later, when I went to the loo, I saw the trolley standing on its own in the passageway.

Twenty minutes after we'd entered the tunnel, the train burst out again. There was nothing to show that we'd left one country and entered another. The French cows grazing in the fields looked just the same as the English ones on the other side. An official came past, looking at passports. Erica Nice looked at Tim as if puzzled in some way and went back to her knitting. Jed returned to his magazine. We didn't speak for the rest of the journey.

We arrived at the Gare du Nord about an hour later. As everyone struggled with their luggage, Tim gazed at the name. "When do we arrive in Paris?" he asked.

“Tim, this is Paris,” I told him. “The Gare du Nord means north station. There are lots of stations in the city.”

“I hope you have a lovely time,” Erica Nice said. She had an old carpet-bag. It was big enough to hold a carpet – and maybe that was what she had been knitting. She winked at Tim. “Good luck with the case, mon ami!”

Meanwhile, the Texan had grabbed a leather briefcase. He nodded at us briefly and joined the queue for the exit. Tim and I retrieved our two bags and a few moments later we were standing on the platform, wondering which way to go.

“We’d better find the Metro,” I said. Bestlé had given us some spending money for the weekend but I didn’t think it would be enough for us to travel everywhere by taxi.

Tim shook his head. “Forget the metro, Nick,” he said. “Let’s take the tube.”

I didn’t even bother to argue. I knew a little French – I’d been learning it from a little Frenchman who taught at our school – and I knew, for example, that Metro was the French word for tube train. On the other hand, I didn’t know the French for idiot, which was the English word for Tim. I picked up the bags and prepared to follow him when suddenly we found ourselves interrupted.

It was Marc Chabrol. The French steward had reappeared and was standing in front of

us, blocking our way. He was terrified. I could see it in his bulging eyes, the sweat on his cheeks, the yellow and black bow tie which had climbed halfway up his neck.

"I have to talk to you, Monsieur," he rasped. He was speaking in English, the words as uncomfortable in his mouth as somebody else's false teeth. "Tonight. At eleven o'clock. There is a café in the sixth *arrondissement*. It is called La Palette..."

"That's very nice of you," Tim said. He seemed to think that Chabrol was inviting us out for a drink.

"Beware of the mad American!" The steward whispered the words as if he were too afraid to speak them aloud. "The mad American...!"

He was about to add something but then his face changed again. He seemed to freeze as if his worst nightmare had just come true. I glanced left and right but if there was someone he had recognized in the crowd, I didn't see them. "*Oh mon Dieu!*" he whispered. He seized Tim's hand and pressed something into the palm. Then he turned and staggered away.

Tim opened his hand. He was holding a small blue envelope with a gold star printed on the side. I recognized it at once. It was a sachet of sugar from the train. "What was all that about?" Tim asked.

I took the sugar and examined it. I thought

he might have written something on it – a telephone number or something. But it was just a little bag of sugar. I slipped it into my back pocket. “I don’t know...” I said. And I didn’t. Why should the steward have left us with a spoonful of sugar? Why did he want to meet us later that night? What was going on?

“Funny people, the French,” Tim said.

Ten minutes later, we were still at the Gare du Nord. The money that Bestlé had given us was in English pounds and pence. We needed euros and that meant queuing up at the Bureau de Change. The queue was a long one and it seemed to be moving at a rate of one euro per hour.

We had just reached the window when we heard the scream.

It was like no sound I had ever heard, thin and high and horribly final. The station was huge and noisy but the scream cut through the crowd like a scalpel. Everybody stopped and turned to see where it had come from. Even Tim heard it. “Oh dear,” he said. “It sounds like someone has stepped on a cat.”

Tim changed thirty pounds, and taking the money we moved in the direction of the Metro. Already a police car had arrived and several uniformed gendarmes were hurrying towards the trains. I strained to hear what the crowd was saying. They were speaking French, of course. That didn’t make it any easier.

“What’s happened?”

“It’s terrible. Somebody has fallen under a train.”

“It was a steward. He was on the train from London. He fell off a platform.”

“Is he hurt?”

“He’s dead. Crushed by a train.”

I heard all of it. I understood some of it. I didn’t like any of it. A steward? Off the London train? Somehow I didn’t need to ask his name.

“Tim,” I asked. “What’s the French for murder?”

Tim shrugged. “Why do you want to know?”

“I don’t know.” I stepped onto the escalator and allowed it to carry me down. “I’ve just got a feeling it’s something we’re going to need.”