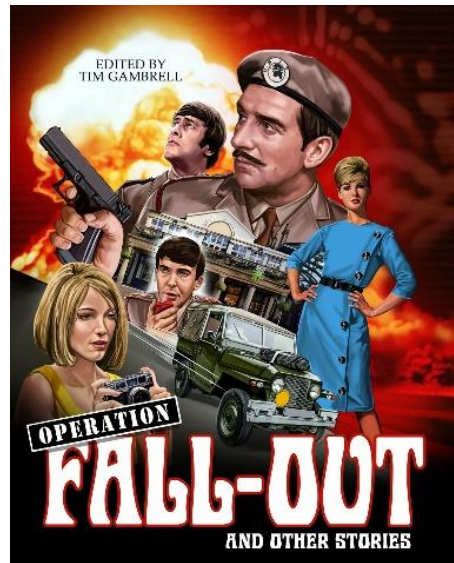




UNIT: OPERATION FALL-OUT

Candy Jar is proud to announce the second of its UNIT Files short story collections – *Operation Fall-Out*. This book is something of a departure as Range Editor, Tim Gambrell, explains: “I was really pleased with the first UNIT Files book (*Operation Wildcat*) but I didn’t want to simply repeat the format for the second book. I set myself three challenges this time. Firstly, the stories would all be set within a specific time period. Secondly, I wanted all the stories to be linked in some way, to feed into a larger narrative. And thirdly, I wanted to try to bring in more writers new to Candy Jar. Hopefully I’ve succeeded on both counts!”



Operation: Fall-Out features eight new short stories, all set during August 1973. Each of the stories are connected, to a greater or lesser extent, and feed into an ongoing narrative that readers will hopefully find both enjoyable and rewarding. The stories feature the UNIT team of the Brigadier, Benton, Captain Turner, Sergeant Walters and Corporal Tracy from *The Invasion*, as well as introducing a wider cast of regular UNIT characters.

Tim continues: “Once I’d worked out what sort of stories I wanted to tell, within the overall narrative, and which UNIT characters to focus on, the next challenge was to line up specific writers with the briefs that best played to their individual strengths. When you’re working with writers for the first time this can be quite a tricky process, but I’m pleased to say that everything fell into place perfectly and all the writers took to their brief with flair and gusto.”

Opening the collection is Gary J Mack, with his story *Designer Death*. Gary has recently published a collection of speculative stories, *Impossible Fruit*, and a novel, *The Secret Magpie*. Gary says: “It was nice to be asked to write the opening story, if a little daunting. I had a detailed brief from Tim, which was very different. I’m used to writing my own stories, under my

own steam, so it was a pleasant change to work with another writer/editor's clear vision. I think I stuck (mostly) to the original brief. It was a joyous experience. Well, it's a UNIT story, and I got to write it. Big tick off my bucket list. Thanks for the wonderful opportunity."

"Gary's story was pivotal to the collection," says Tim, "because there were aspects that he'd either created or fleshed out from my brief which would determine details in some of the later stories."

The second story, *Beyond What We See*, is by James Hornby, who has previously written for Arcbeatle Press and BBV. James says: "I had a blast writing my UNIT adventure! Breathing life into characters from *The Invasion* was a dream come true, particularly Major Branwell, who is new to UNIT at the time of my story. Tim was a pleasure to work with - his outline kept my ideas focused, while allowing me the freedom to make the story my own."

Tim adds: "Although I wanted the book to have a through-narrative, I was conscious that each author needed to have their own voice and style. James' story was so different to Gary's; it gave me real confidence that we could deliver the book we'd set out to create."

Next up is Jamie Hailstone's story *Fever*. Jamie is an author and journalist. He has contributed to Big Finish's *Short Trips* range, as well as writing for Obverse Books, but he is probably best known for his *Professor Howe* novels for Long Scarf Publications.

"Do not let the title of my story fool you," Jamie says. "This is not a pandemic story. *Fever* is a full-throttle adventure that pushes UNIT to the very limit, as they battle to stop London being devastated by a mysterious and unstoppable plague. It is also a tale about imposter syndrome, a subject I am uniquely qualified to write about, having worked in the media for more than twenty years. If you have ever faced a situation, which you have felt you not qualified to deal with, even though you most certainly are, then this story is for you. It is also a story about the redemptive qualities of homebrew beer, which is another subject very close to my heart, albeit for different reasons."

"When I began looking for writers for this collection," says Tim, "I cast my mind back over those I'd known or worked with previously, particularly outside the universe of *Doctor Who*, for fresh perspectives. One such was my old friend Katy Darby, who runs Liars League London. Katy wasn't keen to be involved herself, but she recommended Tessa North to me. Tessa then recommended Doris V Sutherland as well and suddenly I had my next two new authors lined up!"

Story four is *The Four Callers*, by Doris V Sutherland – an author who’s dabbled in horror, science fiction, bizarro, comics and non-fiction. She says: “I’ve written a few *Doctor Who* stories before, for both Big Finish and BBC Sounds, but this was my first time writing a UNIT story. As well as using some of the established UNIT personnel like the Brigadier I was given a new character to introduce: Lance Corporal Mary Savage. Writing her story felt a little like working on *Doctor Who: Redacted* for BBC Sounds, but transplanted to the 1970s – a tale about a character who sees the weird goings-on from the side lines.”

Tim says: “*The Four Callers* is a wonderful character study while also being an engaging story. I knew the sort of piece I wanted from Doris, but when this landed I realised I’d got so much more. And it’s a brilliant kick-start to the second half of the book.”

The Four Callers leads directly into the fifth story, *The Fourth Floor*, by Tessa North. Tessa has previously written for the *Eleventh Doctor Chronicles* range for Big Finish. She says: “It was a really interesting challenge to write a *Doctor Who* story without the Doctor, because you can’t fall back on the Doctor’s knowledge, skills and personalities. UNIT soldiers know more than the average person, but they’re still pretty new to learning about alien life, at least in the period when the story is set. I enjoyed thinking about how these normal humans would understand their experiences and how they might react. I also really enjoyed getting to write for female characters, who would have had a very different UNIT experience than their male counterparts.”

Tim adds: “There were a few instances where different writers’ ideas dovetailed almost perfectly, and that was certainly the case with Tessa’s story. But it’s not just a case of imprinting what was established in an earlier story over a later one, because the ideas flow both ways, like an exchange. So, I found that having aligned *The Fourth Floor* with the rest of the collection, I then had to revisit earlier stories and tweak them again, too. All for the better, I hope!”

Sixth in the collection is what’s become the titular story, *Fall-Out*, by writer, poet and academic Matthew Griffiths. “I’ve known Matthew for many years,” says Tim, “thanks to a mutual friend. Matthew was responsible for me getting a Big Finish commission some years back, so it’s about time I repaid the favour! I originally asked him to write for *Operation Wildcat*, but he was unavailable at the time. I’m glad to have bagged him on the second attempt.”

Fall-Out takes the events from the previous two stories and ramps the pressure up even more. Matthew takes up the story: “The opportunity to write about a nuclear missile strike and its aftermath was, though morbid, also fascinating. I’ve spent a lot of time thinking and writing about climate

change, so am uncomfortably familiar with imagining ends of the world; but there is a difference between that slow burn and the directness of someone pushing the proverbial button. So I spent some time acquainting myself with contemporary visions of the bomb, from the landmark films *The War Game* and *Threads* to the bleak pathos of Raymond Briggs' *When the Wind Blows*, and while that may not all have filtered through to the final version of my story, I hope it's helped me the better to put myself in the mindset of the characters."

He goes on to say, "I can be unequivocally positive, though, about the experience of working with Tim. He and I are old friends, and it was a pleasantly different experience to work collaboratively on the plotting and development of the story. I hope the economy of my prose does his overall plan justice, with just a little of the poetry he'd expect from me."

The seventh story is *Station Keeping*, by another Matthew, Matthew Kresal. The previous three stories feel like they are building up to something big but *Station Keeping* is another step-change to afford the reader some breathing space before the finale. Sergeant Walters takes centre stage, and the story owes something to the first *Benton Files* book – although it's not necessary to have read that.

Matthew Kresal is a writer, critic and podcaster from Alabama. He has written for Obverse Books' *Silver Archive* range and his novel, *Our Man On the Hill*, was published in 2021 by Sea Lion Press. "As someone who came into *Doctor Who* largely through the UNIT serials," says Matthew, "I can't help being thrilled by having a chance to write for some of those characters I first watched on-screen in my teens. To actually write for the Brigadier and Benton is, to quote a cliché, something of a dream come true. Doing so in a sort of SF thriller with UNIT and alien artefacts is just the icing on the cake. Tim has been a fine editor to collaborate with, working to bring us all together, and I can't wait to read where my story fits into things."

The final story in the collection is written by Tim Gambrell. He explains: "As range editor, I needed to keep a close eye on where the other stories were going and how they were progressing, as well as introducing any ongoing narrative strands where necessary. It made sense, therefore, for me to write the final story that pulls all those strands together. I can't say any more than that, because I don't want to give anything away. But what I can say is that this whole process has been an enormous learning curve for me. I've loved working with all the writers, developing the stories and seeing our cast of UNIT characters come to life. I hope that between us all we've succeeded in creating an engaging and varied collection of stories that rewards readers – and not just the first time.

Candy Jar's range of UNIT novels will be kicking off in earnest this summer. The first series will comprise four books to be released during the second

half of 2023. First up will be *The Return*, by Tim Gambrell, which will be picking up UNIT's story in the immediate aftermath of *The Invasion*. Books two and three will be from *Candy Jar* and *Doctor Who* stalwarts Iain McLaughlin and Nick Walters and currently have the working titles *The Catacombs of Seville* and *The Secret of Foxfell Forest*. Both of these stories will take place simultaneously. The first UNIT series will end with a sequel to *The Return*, again written by Tim Gambrell. More on these titles and their release dates closer to the time.