



## **CANDY JAR BOOKS ANNOUNCES** **SIXTH BENTON FILES BOOK**

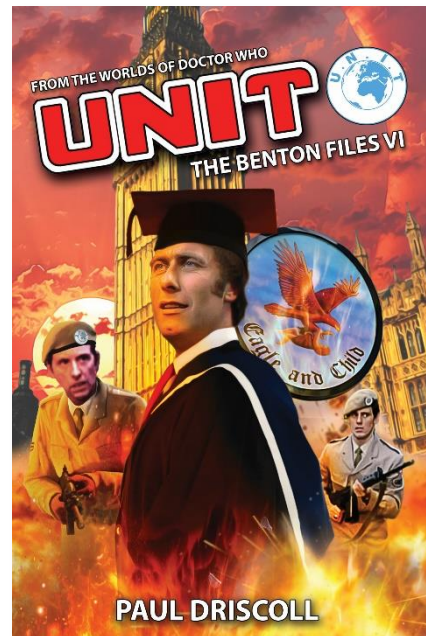
Candy Jar is pleased to announce the sixth book in the ongoing *Benton Files* short story series.

Like the previous volume, *The Benton Files VI* again contains one long story instead of two shorter ones. *Aliens, Alchemy & Ale* is written by Paul Driscoll, another writer new to Candy Jar.

Range editor Tim Gambrell tells us how this came about. "Paul was one of a number of writers to whom I reached out some time ago. Like Matt Barber previously, Paul came back with an idea and, indeed, an initial draft that I just felt we could do so much more with. Unless it's a stylistic choice, I tend not to enjoy short stories that feel like edited highlights of something much larger. There were moments in Paul's story where that seemed to be the case because – like the good writer he is – he was trying to keep within the word limit. So, I sent him away with the task of expanding key parts of the story that felt could be developed further. Thankfully, he jumped at the chance and here we are."

Paul explains where the seed of his idea came from: "The starting point I set myself was to imagine Benton in a totally unfamiliar setting – not an alien one, but a very human world far removed from his day job. I thought it would be fun to place Benton in a setting where he'd be like a fish out of water."

"We have to be careful," says Tim, "that we're not putting Benton in certain situations simply for the sake of a story. Part of my role as range editor is to know when to put the brakes on an idea. Benton goes to university – to Oxbridge? It might sound unlikely, but Paul fully justified it in the context and how could I doubt such a shrewd undercover move by the Brigadier?"



Paul goes on: "There's a very personal link in choosing Oxford University. I was a mature student there between 1996-1999, at the same college where I set much of the story, and very much felt out of place myself. I was married, we'd not long had our first child, and I wasn't particularly academically minded. I didn't have time to join a student society, but I did spend many an evening drinking in *The Eagle & Child*. Yes, the college did have a resident tortoise, and croquet was a regular pastime on the quad. It also had a snooker room in the basement. Having to wear a gown and mortar board as we walked from one college to another made them surprisingly irritating journeys to navigate, with overseas tourists regularly stopping us to take photos. So many memorable images that I could play around with as I imagined the story. Benton has similar experiences to my own, with the added spice of him having to mix with pacifist, anti-military students."

But there's another element at play in *Aliens, Alchemy & Ale*. Tim takes up the story again. "My original intention was to pair up Paul's story with a linked one by Kara Dennison. Paul and Kara have written together often. However, it would have been a very uneven book if we'd continued down that path. Candy Jar readers won't have to wait too long to find out what Kara came up with, but between her and Paul, his story ended up heading much further afield than simply Oxford. Paul's story is now able to breathe and develop more organically, without losing the pace or the sense of wonder."

All in all, *Aliens, Alchemy & Ale* takes Benton to some intriguing new places, never before explored in the *Benton Files* range. Readers will have to wait to find out which of the alien guest cast in Paul's story will also feature in Kara's!

We'll leave the final thoughts to Paul himself: "UNIT holds a very special place in my *Doctor Who* affections, harking back to my earliest experiences of the series. The first TV story I remember watching in full was Tom Baker's debut, *Robot*, but I have patchy memories of the Pertwee years. With all that was weird, wonderful and frightening about *Who*, there was a familiarity in the military characters, a grounded sense of reassurance knowing that UNIT was working to protect my world. It's the one element of the series I didn't want to change, and I grew increasingly unhappy at every passing story with no UNIT involvement. Aside from the Target novelisations, I got my UNIT fix by making up my own stories in comic book form. Nearly fifty years on, the opportunity to write for UNIT at Candy Jar is a great honour and thrill."

*The Benton Files VI*, by Paul Driscoll, with cover art by Richard Young, is available to pre-order now.

**Blurb:**

*Join retired Sergeant Major John Benton as he recounts another tale of his exploits from yesteryear. In Aliens, Alchemy & Ale, by Paul Driscoll, young Sergeant Benton finds himself dispatched to Oxford University on an undercover mission for the Brigadier. He swiftly inveigles himself with the Alien Investigation Society, which leads him to the local brewery where strange things are afoot with their new drink, Alchemy. Stranger still is the College groundskeeper and his links to the prison planet Sirius Five. What plans does the masked, enigmatic Mr Stein have, not only for the students at Oxford, but for the government of Great Britain itself – and possibly the world? Read this new hair-raising adventure to find out...*