

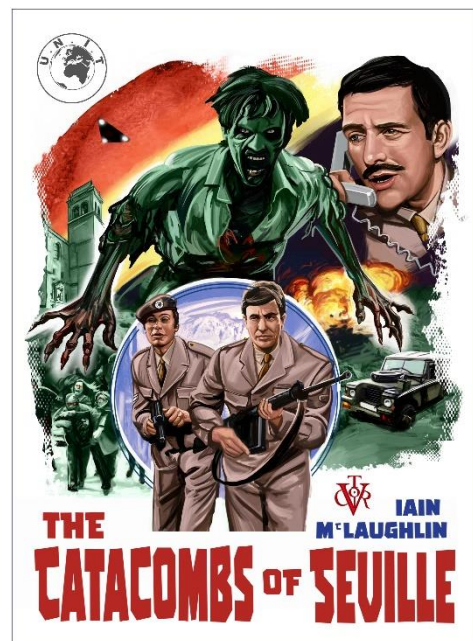


THE CATACOMBS OF SEVILLE

Candy Jar is pleased to announce the second title in its new range of UNIT novels, *The Catacombs of Seville*, by Iain McLaughlin.

"I'm from an army family," says Iain, "so revisiting the lads from UNIT is always a pleasure for me."

Range Editor Tim Gambrell tells us a little about how the novel came about: "I had an idea for the second and third novels. The action in each would take place concurrently, but I wanted both books to remain separate and work independently. As well as the team from *The Invasion*, we've introduced some new UNIT regulars in the books so far. Readers are still getting to know these characters and I figured that splitting the cast between the two books would help give everyone a greater share of the limelight early on in the range. I needed two experienced writers with whom to entrust my plan, and thankfully both Iain McLaughlin and Nick Walters (whose novel *The Secret of Foffell Forest* will be up next) were more than willing."



Tim continues: "Another stipulation was that I wanted Iain's story to be set in continental Europe somewhere. UNIT is an international force, and I wanted our new range to reflect that early on. We eventually agreed on Seville as an interesting location – and of course, it has links with *Doctor Who* thanks to the 1985 story *The Two Doctors*. But what we ended up with was a far cry from what Iain originally pitched."

"*The Catacombs of Seville* was a sort of replacement for another story," Iain explains. "I originally pitched a Cold War thriller with sci-fi elements, but it didn't feel right for the world just now so that got set aside. I was given certain requirements for a story, which is always good. I like getting

a bit of a shopping list from an editor. It focuses the brain. I was to have Major Branwell in command of a mission in Europe. He'd have NCOs Benton and Tracy with him. I was also given the date of September 1973 which meant Spain was still under General Franco. That gave me politics and an era to work with and the Spanish soldiers in the story came out of that. As soon as I had the authoritarian figures, I needed balance from the civilians. From there we got Pilar Ortega and her family, particularly her granny... her Abuela. I'm very fond of the Ortega family and I hope the readers will be too."

Iain continues: "There's quite a lot for Benton in this story. He's one of our most recognisable characters, so I gave him a lot of the action. That meant I could give more character-based material to Corporal Tracy and then look at each of the corporals through the eyes of Major Branwell. Something that interested me was looking at what it means to command soldiers and what it takes to be a good leader. That makes an interesting mix of plots and some very different characters. And of course, there's the Brigadier. Anyone who gets the chance to write for the Brig should jump at it. Splendid fellow."

"I needed the Brigadier to appear in both Iain's and Nick's books," says Tim. "That may have involved some unlikely wrangling if he'd been caught up in either piece of action. And as UNIT's commanding officer, he should be in a strategic role. When the Brigadier does head into battle it should have greater impact and gravitas."

Having agreed the needs and restrictions, Iain let his mind flow. "The story started from a mixture of time and location. Franco's Spain, the blossoming package holiday trade and I recall in the mid-'70s, one of my cousins had books by Erich von Daniken and the like, so UFOs were becoming a thing... but Spain was still a very religious country but with a fascist in charge. There's a lot there to put into the mixing bowl."

Tim says: "*The Catacombs of Seville* is very different to the previous book, *The Vaughn Identity*, but still very recognisably UNIT. I want each of our books to bring something different to the mix where possible. Chronologically this book comes after *The Vaughn Identity* and *Operation: Fall-Out*."

"Ultimately," says Iain, "the story is about being in command, and what it takes to lead troops. Everybody does it differently and not everybody is cut out for it."

The cover art, created by UNIT range regular Martin Baines, perfectly captures the vision that Iain had for the book. Iain was very particular about the imagery, wanting it to set the right atmosphere for readers, and he was extremely pleased with the final result. Despite facing health challenges at

the time, Martin dedicated himself to the project. Reflecting on the experience, Martin says: "Iain's story is a wonderful tale, rich with visual iconography. Even though I was feeling unwell, it was a pleasure to work on this project. Monsters are my speciality, and I love bringing the worlds they inhabit to life."

Blurb:

September 1973.

The fledgling UNIT has had a busy summer, tackling Tobias Vaughn and being infiltrated by the alien Jocransten.

Now Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart finds himself leaned on by the British Government to assist the Spanish army in an investigation, couched as a training exercise in Seville. Major Branwell steps up to the mark to prove his worth, with Corporals Benton and Tracy for support. But it seems that almost everyone has something to hide – even the dead.

What do the lights in the sky above Seville signify? Who can the UNIT team trust? And what is killing people in the darkness?

It quickly becomes apparent that the situation is far more dangerous and involved than the British or Spanish governments let on. UNIT reinforcements are not an option. Besides which, Captain Turner is off leading a mission of his own back in England. Only Benton seems to be enjoying himself, having befriended a local teacher, Pilar Ortega, and her feisty Abuela. But where will that lead when the threat of death is all around?

And why does the local monastery look like a fortress?