

Sockhops and Séances

Guidelines

18thWall Productions

Anthology Curated by Nicole Petit

It seems like everything's finally settled down, fifty years into the twentieth century. War is over. The economy's booming. People are on a long exodus from the city. It's all settling.

But the occult lurks everywhere...

In sleepovers, as teenagers intone, "Light as a feather, stiff as a board." Or stare into the mirror, calling upon Mary. They scream, convinced something looks back from inside the glass.

New music dominates the airwaves, discordant and wild. They say it's the devil's music.

Strange lights dominate the sky. Are they Russians? Little Green Men? Or something altogether stranger?

Perhaps things are not as settled as they feel...

What We Want

THE BASICS: Supernatural stories set in the 1950s. Not horror stories, necessarily, but stories that use the 1950s and its spook culture (and spook-busting culture) in an engaging way. Bring us supernatural adventures, supernatural mysteries, supernatural fantasy, or supernatural pulp.

First and foremost, aim to capture the spirit of the era. That's something we felt Speakeasies and Spiritualists succeeded with, in regards to the 1920s.

THE SOCKHOPS: Historical accuracy is required. This extends beyond technology to attitudes, beliefs, and so on. See below for a full discussion of historical accuracy.

We are open to stories starring (or featuring) historical figures.

THE SÉANCES: Creative, fresh supernatural elements are preferred. Think more *The Twilight Zone* or *The Outer Limits*, and less *Godzilla* or *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*.

While we're not closed to submissions featuring traditional occult threats such as vampires, werewolves, etc., stories featuring these monsters will be a hard sell. Only the most outstanding stories will catch our eye.

If you chose to use a monster—or someone pretending to be a monster—we'd prefer something wild. Think of *The Blob*, or the pod people, albeit occult in nature. *The threat must be occult—or preternatural—in nature.* This extends to stories taking advantage of the UFO craze.

You want things other than horror? Yes. *While we will happily accept horror*, and our collection would be remiss *without* horror, we're *also* looking for a wide-range of genres. Mystery, fantasy, pulp, adventure. Science fiction and Romance are harder sells, but we've

been surprised by submissions in styles we'd never have thought to expect. When in doubt, submit.

*We're looking for supernatural **fantasy** stories, supernatural **mystery** stories, supernatural **pulp** stories, supernatural **adventure** stories, supernatural **horror** stories and any other kind of story so long as they make use of the 1950s milieu.*

Should my ghosts be real, or fake? I have no preference. Focus on telling a good story, whether your spooks are ectoplasm or petroleum jelly.

*I am seeking a mix, however. **You're more likely to be accepted with a fake ghost, however, simply because of how few fake-ghost stories I receive.***

May I set stories anywhere in the world? Yes, we welcome stories set outside of the United States.

May I use the Cthulhu Mythos? Yes, but I strongly encourage, and prefer, fresh takes. Show us something new. The more it feels like a copy/paste of Lovecraft, the less interested I'll be. Jon Black's stories and novels are an excellent example of how to do this.

Do you take reprints? Yes. Just let us know in the submission (this will not count against you).

INSPIRATIONS:

- "The Monsters are Due on Maple Street" (*The Twilight Zone*)
- *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits* in general
- *Ghost of Dragstrip Hollow (Meets the Hot Rod Gang)* (1959)
- *The Haunting of Hill House* (by Shirley Jackson)
- *Night of the Demon* (1957)
- *The Bowery Boys: Ghost Chasers* (1951)
- *Conjure Wife* (by Fritz Leiber)

What We Don't Want

Historical Inaccuracy

That's the big one. Nothing will make us pass on a story faster than historical inaccuracy. *We're willing to work with authors on such things as culture, clothing, food, and general language.* The background history of a story is easiest to fix, and we love talking about it.

But inaccurate attitudes is a sort of historical inaccuracy that will make us immediately pass on a story. This leaves stories unfixable.

Bigotry is not the default of history. While you are welcome to explore such things, keep in mind, this should be *treated meaningfully* rather than as extraneous, exploitative, or a given.

Presenting all—or the majority of—your characters as racist, sexist, or the like is one of the fastest ways to the reject pile. We're far more interested in nuanced portrayals of *people* than stock types.

*People in the 1950s held a huge variety of opinions. **Reflecting this, instead of repeating the same stock figures, massively increases your chance of acceptance.***

Historical Events to Use Cautiously

The “Red Scare” as a theme. It’s massively over-represented in stories about the 1950s. The majority of stories about it commit cardinal sins: a lack of historical knowledge; a lack of depth; simply repeating what previous stories did.

We will judge stories about the “Red Scare” harshly. You need to be at least as good as “The Monsters are Due on Maple Street” (our gold standard) to merit consideration.

If you choose to use this theme, pitching is highly recommended.

HUAC and the historical “Red Scare.” It’s over-represented in stories about the 1950s, and rarely treated well. *If you have a great idea involving this, treating it with depth and **historical accuracy**, feel free to pitch.* Keep in mind it will be a **hard sell**. We prefer to see the themes of the “Red Scare” used as a general theme; see above for the relevant instructions.

Elvis. We’re going to receive more stories about him than we can print. If you choose to write a story featuring him, make sure it’s stunning. Straying away from the tabloids-are-true approach—or *Bubba Hotep’s* “Elvis fights a monster”—will help your story stand out.

Unacceptable Approaches

The following will be immediately rejected:

- Dark 1950s sitcom parodies. Revealing Ward Cleaver, or a stock 50s sitcom dad, was abusive isn’t clever—or interesting. This is unacceptable either as a story in its own right, or as an aspect within a story.
- World War 3/Nuclear Armageddon. While the threat of nuclear war was present, stories should remain in the real 1950s.

Payment: 5% of the gross profit will be paid for each accepted story. These payments will be issued to you at quarterly intervals. Stories under 1,500 words will only receive 4% of the gross profit.

Rights: First World Digital and Print.

Deadline: March 15th, 2018

Word Count: 4,000-20,000

How to Submit your Story:

- All stories should be sent, as an attachment, to submissions@18thwall.com.
- The file must be formatted in .doc or .docx.
- The interior of the document must be in double spaced Times New Roman (12 point font).
- Indents must be placed through your system's Paragraph function; do not set indents by pressing tab or space. If you already have tabbed or spaced indents, please remove them first. Please use full em dashes (—).
- At the top of your document, please include William Shunn's submission header.
- Tell us a bit about yourself in the body of your email. Don't stress this, it won't make or break your submission.
- Place the collection you're submitting to, your name, and your story title in the subject line of your email. For example, "Their Coats All Red / Rudyard Kipling / The Mark of the Beast"

Nicole Petit writes because no other job lets her sleep until noon. Fantasy is her forte, a sliver of genre right between urban fantasy and fairy tales. She writes the *Magic Realm Manuscripts* series and curated the collections *Just So Stories*, *After Avalon* (#4 Best Anthology—The Predators and Editors' Readers' Poll 2016), and *From the Dragon Lord's Library* (Best Story and Best Cover, respectively—the Pulp Ark New Pulp Awards 2016). The Predator and Editor Readers' Poll 2016 named her #3 Best Editor overall.