

HAPPINESS ONLY REAL WHEN SHARED.

Nomadic adventurer Chris McCandless scrawled this revelation in the margin of Doctor Zhivago just before he died in the Alaskan wilderness, hungry and alone. For McCandless, those five words summed up the novel's theme of finding meaning in the relationships all around us. Again—in the relationships all around us. That's because interactions with others are the glue that hold life together. Whether as an extreme extrovert or a reluctant recluse, we all find purpose through interacting with others. So it's no surprise that the same is true of great stories. From Frodo and Sam to Luke and Vader. Bonnie and Clyde to Laverne and Shirley. Zelda and Link. Katniss and Rue. Wall-E and Eve. Paul Muad'dib and Stilgar. Our dearest books, movies, and games all revolve around one thing: **relationship**.

That's why Havok's Season 14 is all about those ties that bind. We're calling for the funniest friendships, biggest breakups, corniest encounters, rowdiest romances, angriest arch-enemies, bravest besties, and any other scenario featuring two or more sentient beings that you can dream up, 1,000 words at a time. So, for the next twelve months, pull on our heart strings, tickle our funny bones, and steal our collective breath with the very best and worst relationships ever written.

Note: This is a reference sheet for inspiration only; deadlines may change; check the Season Themes page on GoHavok.com to verify which months are open for submissions and which are closed.

BFFs – DEADLINE: September 11, 2026

We're starting our year-long season off at the beginning of life's relationships. With a shared toy in kindergarten. A whispered secret. A common tragedy. Even an imagined monster under the bed. Seldom realized at first, childhood BFFs ("best friends forever") fit together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and afford an irreplaceable source of belonging, confidence, fun, and usually mischief, even if they seldom truly last "forever." Whether your young characters are thrown together amidst a revolution on a lunar mining base, a missing persons case in suburban neighborhood, or a housing mix-up at a peculiar boarding school, give us all the feels that come with two young characters who know they'll face the world together, no matter what. Your story doesn't need to focus on when the childhood friends first met, but whatever is happening they should be central to the story. Oh, and one last note for discerning writers: for this month, our editors will be keeping a special eye out for middle-grade fiction (if you know, you know. If not, look it up. You are a writer, after all). So if that's your genre, or even if you just want to try your hand at it, now's your time to shine! *Publishes in January 2027.*

FIRST LOVE – DEADLINE: October 9, 2026

Ahh, February. Valentine's Day. The most romantic day of the year, right? But wait! Before you roll your eyes and give a knowing sneer, we at Havok implore you to search your heart back to your younger days—back when rose-colored glasses were all the rage, hormones clouded every rational thought, and no one had yet dumped you over text message or ghosted you in a department store parking lot. And that's because this month's theme is all about that love at first sight moment. Those butterflies in the stomach, clumsy love letters, first kisses, hopeless crushes, and love-struck mistakes. As always, search every genre from steampunk comedy to sci-fi thriller, because YA romance comes in all forms... Oh, did I say YA? That's because February is young adult month! While not strictly required, YA stories will receive a little extra attention this month because, as writers, we should always know our audience, and nothing says "young adult" like bumbling, love-struck, hopelessly naïve teenagers. *Publishes in February 2027.*

FORTUITOUS – DEADLINE: November 13, 2026

Chance encounters, business connections, single-serve friends—any unexpected run-in that carries with it a spark of inevitable change. If it feels too good to be true, you're off to a good start. If a shining knight shows up at just the right time, a bold field mouse ignores his friends' advice and shows the trapped lion a hidden escape route, a benevolent fourth-dimensional AI slides onto a doomed starship, or a bumbling detective just happens to be in the right place at the right time, you're definitely on the right track. And if you tie it all together with strong writing and a satisfying conclusion (beware the unsatisfying *deus ex machina*!), your publication journey will need a lot less luck than your "fortuitous" characters to find a happy ending. *Publishes in March 2027.*

EXTENDED FAMILY – DEADLINE: December 11, 2026

As we stretch our creative legs further into the year, we're turning our sights to extended families. We all have that weird aunt or uncle, that curiously rich second cousin, that great, great, great grandson who travels back in time to warn—okay, maybe not all extended family is universal, but there's no denying the importance of these characters in any good story. And just as we highlighted those fortuitous friendships last month, April is all about those unexpected family members who show up at just the right time, or whose ramblings finally start making sense, or who always seem to draw the rest of the family into their harebrained ideas. Whatever the relationship, remember to tie it together with blood, because the weirdos we're related to are the hardest to ignore. *Publishes in April 2027.*

GENERATIONAL – DEADLINE: January 8, 2027

There's no stronger bond than that of a parent and child. Of course, that assumes the parent doesn't make good on the "I brought you into this world; I can take you out!" threat. And it's for that reason that we have grandparents—to offer a little perspective, a little grace, and a lot of levity. May's "Generational" theme covers a lot of ground, so be sure to use it. We want authentic, immersive points of view from all three stages of life that cover the many generational conflicts and lessons that that we can all relate to. But we want them wrapped in unique settings and driven by unforgettable characters, so don't hold back. *Publishes in May 2027.*

TIES THAT BIND – DEADLINE: February 12, 2027

Blood relatives bind us. Best friends find us. But there's no relationship that requires a deeper level of voluntary commitment than matrimony. Wedding ceremonies look different in every culture and time period, and the duties and expectations of a husband and wife are defined by both public and personal beliefs, but "until death do us part" seems the perfect theme to celebrate and challenge those many differences across our realm, planet, galaxy... You get the picture. So, for June—traditionally the month for weddings—go ahead and paint your own picture of marriage. Show us the strengths, weaknesses, and most entertaining elements that come from a public proclamation of enduring love. Period pieces and unique cultural points of view are a great place to start, but beyond that, get creative... but not too creative. Certain marriage pairings get weird fast (and not in a good way). Even Havok has its limits. *Publishes in June 2027.*

SIBLINGS – DEADLINE: March 12, 2027

For better or worse, we don't choose our siblings. From conjoined twins to estranged brothers, siblings share a bond that can never be truly broken. For this reason, brothers and sisters are often forced to work through their differences and team up against the world, as long as they don't kill each other first. So give us those inexplicable bonds, those chaotic dinner tables, and those epic journeys with characters who truly "get" each other, whether they realize it or not. *Publishes in July 2027.*

FRENEMIES – DEADLINE: April 9, 2027

That time when sworn enemies are forced to work together to survive—and find they kinda like each other. The mean popular girl who helps you out when nobody is looking. The moment you realize that your best friend is also your greatest rival. These are the relationships that interesting stories are made of. Whether your characters are competing for top marks, on the battlefield, going after the same bounty, or vying for the throne, give us all the social, psychological, and emotional angles used by frenemies as they strive to come out on top. *Publishes in August 2027.*

CLOSE QUARTERS – DEADLINE: May 14, 2027

Sometimes, it's not just our family that we can't choose. Sometimes, we're thrown together with a person or group in such an inescapable situation that we're forced to get along or die trying. Think suspicious neighbors, supernatural cellmates, platoon comrades, or stranded crews trying to get back to their ship—or starship. Or just that annoying voice in the cubicle next to yours. Now's the time to force together the most unlikely pairings and watch them either fight it out or team up to take on a larger threat. *Publishes in September 2027.*

ARCH-ENEMIES – DEADLINE: June 11, 2027

If you think Havok is looking for fuzzy, heartwarming stories during spooky season, you haven't been paying attention. This month, forget true love, BFFs, and fond memories. We want conflict! Knock-down, drag-out fights. Good versus evil. Light versus dark. Rivals as old as time. Bad breakups, unavoidable showdowns, and unexpected results. Stick to the classics or give us new twists on old tropes. Whatever the situation, make it an epic contrast to the wholesome, foundational relationships we've sought out in other months. *Publishes in October 2027.*

SEASONED LOVE – DEADLINE: July 9, 2027

Okay, enough of the Halloween shenanigans. November is all about thankfulness and reflection. And there's no better place to do that than from a couple of rocking chairs. Of course, a chatty elderly couple doesn't always make for the most interesting story, so push those two off the front porch and into an adventure. Whether they're recounting an old adventure or having one last hurrah, give us endearing inside jokes, grumpy bickering, sage perspective, and all the troubles and ailments that only old folks can truly understand. *Publishes in November 2027.*

FOUND FAMILY – DEADLINE: August 13, 2027

This holiday season, Havok welcomes with open arms those stories with arguably the most interesting relationships—found family. We want unexpected and unofficial adoptions, come-as-you-are Christmas feasts, space crews and war buddies who have each others' backs, and quests for long-lost siblings. The how and why are up to you, but acceptance and charity are the reason for the season. So however you can create that yearned-for fam outside the bonds of blood, we want to see it. *Publishes in December 2027.*

WE NEED ALL FIVE MAJOR GENRES

The “Two’s Company” season lends itself to all our genres, but you may wonder how to combine *your* favored genre with these themes. The tips below should help. Also, we generally receive fewer submissions for the mystery, thriller, and humor categories, so your story may have a better chance at publication if it fits those genres.

Here are some genre-specific ideas to spark your imagination:

- *Mystery*: The mystery or question doesn’t *have* to center around the relationship, but it can. Where did great uncle Marvin disappear to? Why haven’t I heard from Shawna in months? Who is leaving the mysterious packages at his door? Or go forensics and police procedural and feature the relationships between the characters working on a murder mystery.
- *Science Fiction*: The key to writing our relationship themes for the sci-fi genre is all about the setting. Put your characters in the future, on a spaceship, or using futuristic technology. Give your story a time travel twist.
- *Humor*: Humor can be tricky, but the funniest stories often have contrasting character traits, people making ridiculous choices, reacting in unexpected ways, and having crazy things happen to them.
- *Thriller*: Put one of your characters in danger. Boom-done. And if you combine danger with a speculative twist, your story has a better chance of selection by more than one of our genre teams.
- *Fantasy*: While there is a wealth of opportunity in the fantasy genre for human relationships, don’t hesitate to feature the nuances of what it’s like to live as a kobold, or for a sparkly vampire to fall in love with a human (never mind, it’s been done), or explore how gnome extended families *really* act during the holidays.

TIP #1: Sometimes we get questions about our submission process. Here’s a behind-the-scenes peek. Our submissions team routes your story to the genre team indicated on your submission form most of the time (Mystery Monday, Techno Tuesday, etc). If one genre team is low on submissions, stories that fit multiple genres may be shifted to fill that gap. Our teams coordinate together when needed to share stellar stories when one genre day is full and a story fits more than one genre. Bottom line: If your story can combine two genres, it may get an extra boost.

TIP #2: Sign up for our [author newsletter](#) to stay in the loop about opportunities for authors. We usually send a newsletter once a month, but there may be occasional announcements in addition to that schedule.

TIP #3: Follow [@havokauthornews](#) on Instagram for story prompts to spark ideas for our themes. We also post open and closed submission announcements and other author-centric news. On Facebook, follow the [Havok Publishing page](#) and join the [Flash Fiction Writers Guild](#) for the same info. Disclaimer: No guarantee of what info we’ll post, or whether you’ll see the posts when we do. Checking the Season Themes page on our website is the most reliable source for this info.

TIP #4: How to write a fantasy or science fiction story while targeting mystery, thriller, or humor: Take your fantasy (or futuristic) character and setting and center your story around a mystery, a question, an unknown. Or make the situation life-threatening and thrilling. Or give your characters a humorous personality or put them in a hilarious situation.

Using the season themes to inspire you, send us a story that fits any of the following daily flash genres:

MYSTERY MONDAY: From cozy to crime scene, start your week off with a bit of mystery. Creep through downtown foggy London Town, spy on secret agents at a midnight meeting, catch up with an old friend who may or may not be a cat burglar, or just figure out who stole your homework before the last bell rings. It doesn't have to be a classic mystery with detectives, clues, murder, or theft. If it's mysterious, uncertain, or unknown, take us on a journey through the dark and shine a bit of light on the hidden—and maybe even startling—truth.

Sub-genres: Amateur sleuth (*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*), cozy/whodunit (Agatha Christie), crime (*The Departed*), legal/medical (*A Few Good Men*), noir (*Blade Runner*), police procedural (*Silence of the Lambs*), professional sleuth (Sherlock Holmes), supernatural (*The Woman in Black*), psychological horror (*Sphere*)

TECHNO TUESDAY: As your week hits its stride, don't be afraid to ask, "What if..." What if NASA really is covering for the aliens? What if your new cell phone comes with a free brain implant? What if a radioactive spider gives you superpowers? What if time travel vacations are a thing of the past? With Havok, even the mysteries of the universe aren't too great to explore over your morning cup of coffee.

Sub-genres: Hard sci-fi (*The Martian*), soft sci-fi (*Spider-Man*), military (*Starship Troopers*), space opera (*Star Wars*, *Dune*), steampunk (*The Time Machine*), cyber/bio/nanopunk (*The Matrix*), voyages extraordinaire (Jules Verne), gothic (*Frankenstein's Monster*), dystopian (*The Hunger Games*)

WACKY WEDNESDAY: Halfway done, and who couldn't use a little humor over their lunch break? Well, embrace the lighter side of Havok as you laugh your stress away, 1,000 words at a time. Whether you're running alongside a hilariously unfortunate private eye, hitching a ride across the galaxy, helping a kid defend his home from Christmas burglars, enjoying a "sick day" with a high school adventurer, or going on an epic quest to find a holy grail, you can rest assured that your adventure will be anything but serious.

Sub-genres: Forget 'em! What would Wacky Wednesday be with a bunch of rules? If it's funny, lighthearted, and downright entertaining, you're hitting the mark.

THRILLER THURSDAY: As your week races to a close, get caught up in some heart-pumping excitement. Run down a terrorist before time runs out. Infiltrate a secret society before they collect the last relic. Untangle a sociopath's plot before he pins the whole thing on you. Take down a crime boss before he takes you down. And do it all before your kids wake up from their afternoon nap.

Sub-genres: Action (*James Bond*), adventure (*Indiana Jones*), conspiracy (*The Da Vinci Code*), crime (*Die Hard*), medical (*Outbreak*), man vs. nature (*Jaws*, *Twister*)

FANTASY FRIDAY: TGI fantasy! Now, sit back and drift into another world filled with high elves, amateur wizards, magic wardrobes, suave vampires, and gun-slinging monster hunters. With Havok, there's no limit to how far the story will take you as you kick your feet up and usher in another fantastic weekend.

Sub-genres: Fairy tales (*Cinderella*), horror (*Dracula*), high fantasy (*The Lord of the Rings*), low fantasy (*Harry Potter*), magical realism (*Midnight in Paris*), medieval (*A Game of Thrones*), portal (*The Chronicles of Narnia*), urban/paranormal (*The Dresden Files*)