

UNSPEAKABLE HORROR 3: DARK RAINBOW RISING

EDITED BY: VINCE A. LIAGUNO

When the pendulum of civil rights and social change initiatives swings toward progress, the LGBTQIA community often holds its collective breath in anticipation of the inevitable backlash when the pendulum swings back. Even with these gains, we are constantly looking over our shoulder—waiting for the next shoe to drop, for the next attack on our personhood. The community’s enemies see progress as a perceived danger to their own heteronormative bubbles—and any advancement threatens to burst those fragile bubbles. Even as we hoist the rainbow flag in celebration, a dark rainbow rises on the horizon...

For this third volume of the award-winning *Unspeakable Horror* series, we are seeking original short stories up to 6,000 words that explore this idea of great terror growing from the LGBTQIA community’s great strides forward. We want your terrifying interpretations and extensions of this theme—not a literal reading.

Questions to explore:

Does the unspeakable horror manifest in a subtle, growing sense of unease that our enemies must surely be plotting to thwart our efforts—or does it present in outward paranoia?

Do we settle into a false sense of security and not see the unspeakable terror that rises behind us?

Do we turn on each other now that our external enemies are (seemingly) defeated?

Do we leave part of our community behind in some misguided act of self-preservation?

Stories can be set in any time period, as long as the narrative includes some historical LGBTQ+ civil rights/social movement/moment as a direct or indirect backdrop. Think:

- Homosexuality and the Holocaust;
- the Stonewall Riots;
- the Mattachine Society and its 1966 “Sip-In”;
- the first Pride parades in the early 70s;
- the American Psychiatric Association’s removal of homosexuality from the official list of mental illnesses;
- the assassination of Harvey Milk;
- the Upstairs Lounge fire in New Orleans;
- the AIDS crisis at its advent, at its peak;
- Proposition 8;
- Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell;
- the murder of Matthew Shepherd;
- DOMA and eventual marriage equality;
- the growth of LGBTQIA families;

- One Millions Moms and their crusade against inclusive Hallmark Channel programming;
- serial killers that have targeted the LGBTQIA community (be careful with your handling of the internalized homophobia elements here);
- calls for the end of conversion therapy;
- the current rise of anti-transgender legislation;
- how LGBTQIA inroads in America affect LGBTQIA persons in other places around the world.

The above list is **NOT** inclusive nor is it mandatory that one of these events must be included—these are merely prompts to get the creative juices flowing.

What we want:

- This is an LGBTQIA/horror anthology. Stories must have a strong, central gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer focus/slant/theme.
- Stories with a strong, literary feel and crafted with language that captivates
- Stories with a strong sense of atmosphere
- Stories that shock and/or provoke—but for the right reasons. We want that shock and provocation to sneak up on us versus clobbering us over the head. We want material that elicits an emotional response of some kind and leaves us with our jaws hanging open upon conclusion.
- Above all, this is a **horror** anthology—we want stories that are scary and unsettling, stories that evoke a sense of dread or unease or excruciating tension. Think horror that's rooted in existentialism, folklore, psychology, the avant garde, body horror, survivalist horror, eco-horror, the supernatural, occultism, urban gothic, suburban gothic, and weird fiction.

What we don't want:

- Straightforward erotica;
- Stories that confuse or conflate sexual orientation or gender identity with pedophilia or bestiality (It's happened more times than we care to admit on past calls for submissions!);
- Science fiction or fantasy;
- Zombies, werewolves, vampires, and other traditional monsters will be an exceptionally hard sell unless you've got something singular to offer;
- Humorous horror;
- Poetry;
- Stories with graphic descriptions of violence/abuse against children, women, or animals.

Tips from the submissions process for the first two volumes of *Unspeakable Horror*:

- It doesn't take an authentic LGBTQIA person to imbue a work with an authentic LGBTQIA POV. It takes talent. The *Unspeakable Horror* anthology series is an inclusive project that welcomes *all* writers from *all* backgrounds, abilities, orientations, and gender identities.
- There's a difference between seamlessly weaving keen political commentary throughout the fabric of a story and dropping a political rant into the middle of it. Save the political speeches for <insert name of favorite politician here>. Chances are, they're better at them.

- We want to experience terror from the stories—not suffer nightmares from the grammar. Line edit, proofread, line edit some more, proofread again. Repeat until verb tenses agree, the punctuation doesn't upstage your characters, and sentences enjoy self-actualization.
- The stories that blew our socks off on previous calls for submissions were the ones with a strong sense of setting and mood.
- Please. We beg of you: No psychotic trans killers or lesbian revenge tales in which someone's unmentionables are chopped, eaten, or otherwise lopped off. Cliché is dead.
- This is a queer-themed horror anthology. We're looking for horror tales with a strong queer subtext—not straight horror stories with a gay character or two thrown in to meet a quota.
- Horror sometimes demands a suspension of belief—not a suspension of logic.

Terms: Pays \$0.10 (ten cents) per word upon acceptance for All Rights throughout the world and 12-month exclusivity from date of publication. Payment will be made within (10) business days of acceptance.

Original stories only—no reprints.

Word count up to 6,000 words. Stories of 6,001 words or more will be rejected instantly.

No simultaneous submissions.

Follow Shunn format.

Submissions open on 8-01-22. Submissions close on 9-30-22. All authors will be notified of our editorial decisions by 10-31-22. Contributors and TOC announcements will follow.

Anthology is slated for 2nd quarter 2023 publication—subject to change.

Submissions can be sent to submissions@darkrainbowrising.com beginning August 1st. Please format subject line as follows:

UH3 / Author Last Name / "Name of Story"

Any submissions received prior to August 1st will be deleted without being read.