



8 October 2013

Hi Mark,

Thanks very much for your thoughtful comment regarding our submissions policy. Please allow us to offer some insight as to why we are so insistent that stories fall under the PG-13 aegis. We absolutely believe in addressing difficult issues; we simply ask that our writers do so in a manner that is friendly to readers of all ages.

Please know that we write this from the perspective of gay women who have faced prejudice and hatred, if not outright violence. We are so sorry that that was your experience. We don't wish to shy away from any difficult issues. We've been there; we know how hard the coming out process can be. We also know that some kids have a very positive experience. *Iris* aims to validate both experiences. We want kids who are struggling to find heroes within our characters, and we also want kids who are fortunate enough to escape prejudice to see themselves reflected in our pages, too. We want to engage with these issues, but we want to do that in a responsible way.

Therefore, we will accept stories that reference drugs or past violence, as per PG-13 guidelines. Similarly, we will accept kisses and the like. We will not accept explicit sex, violence, or drug use. We are aware that these elements are a component of many teenagers' coming-of-age. However, as stated in the guidelines for submission, we are appealing to a young demographic. We have heard from readers as young as thirteen. We have a responsibility to those kids to keep our content sex-, violence-, and drug-free.

As you note, most of our writers recognize that we are asking for stories that do not include sexual relations, depictions of drug use, and violence that occurs in the story. However, we can certainly clarify the statement to indicate that, within reason, such elements may be referenced.

The words 'immediately disqualify' have had the effect we've desired: authors have contacted us regarding various elements of their stories, we've discussed it, and they have either decided to submit - or not - according to our guidelines. We are willing to work with writers. However, as we have teenage readers on staff with access to the submissions manager, we cannot in good conscience allow them to happen upon explicit scenes. They read the stories without our knowledge and therefore without our oversight; this is the challenge of working with minors. We have a responsibility to them and to their parents.

If you take a look at what's available for queer kids in today's literary market, it's sadly skewed towards the sensational. We aim to counter that.

With regard to sex, we see no reason for young teenagers to read explicit sexual material. We want to be a safe space that welcomes readers of all ages. We are not comfortable with publishing writing containing sexual content in a literary magazine for minors.



With regard to drug use, drug use is illegal. We will not feature stories that contain any element of illegality. Again, we are not comfortable publishing such content for minors. We will consider pieces that contend with the *consequences* of drug use, so long as that use is in the past and is not depicted in any way in the story.

With regard to violence, as per our guidelines we will not feature stories that depict violent acts. We will consider pieces that address the consequences of such violence, but we will not publish stories that portray that violence.

It is our hope that writers will approach this rule as a challenge, not a constraint, and we have been so impressed by the caliber of work we've received. Readers of the first issue of *Iris* will find stories that deal with a wide variety of issues: with gender dysphoria (from several perspectives), with death, with eating disorders; with coming out; with bullying. And that's just from the first three weeks or so of our open call!

We will post this email as a unique post, and update the guidelines for submission to reflect this clarification.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions or concerns. Thanks again for reaching out! We hope that our reasoning is clearer, and that you will consider submitting your work to *Iris*.

Best,
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