

Living with a K-fan

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It all started one auspicious evening when my younger sister stumbled upon KBS World. She was feeling rather blue. There were four guys on the TV screen clad in the same brightly-coloured outfit doing the same dance moves. It made her laugh hysterically. So the next day she went back for more. And more. And MORE. Initially, it was just K-pop. Then she moved on to K-drama, and after that the variety shows and game shows where the said K-pop stars and actors were invited. Then came other random shows.

The first few hundred times I heard her scream at the top of her lungs, I ran to her room to check if she was alright – only to find her reacting to something on the laptop screen. It was almost always to do with a K-pop group singing live or one of the innumerable plot twists in a K-drama. Now I have grown immune to such phenomena. In fact, I have become somewhat of an expert. I can tell by the tone of her squeal which of these scenarios has happened.

Over the years, she has forced me to watch countless music videos with the most bizarre plots. For instance, in one video the singers casually zoomed in and out of space while getting injected lying on a hospital bed. And if I ever dare to suggest that we watch something together, the most likely choice is hours of K-drama which reminds me of my 7th grade school plays.

Random names, facts and lessons I learned about the Korean way: *2 Days & 1 Night* is a reality-variety show and not a game show. BTS and EXO are not the same. They are separate K-pop groups. Sehun is the youngest EXO member. D.O. is the one with least facial expressions. *Healer* is our savior.

MyAsianTV should be the homepage on every browser. Closing a live stream can easily lead to my untimely demise.

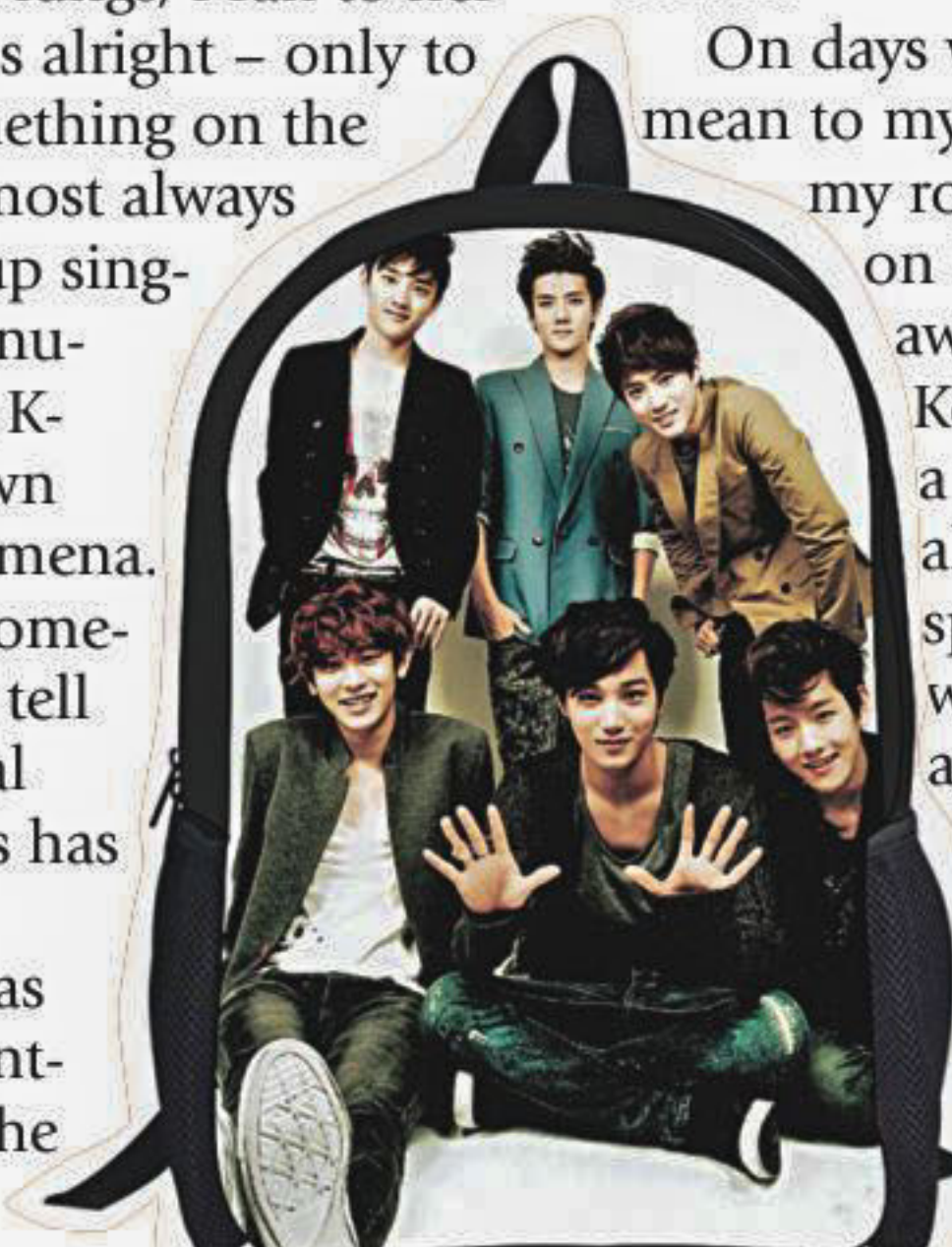
Instead of cringing at her fandom, I have actually started taking interest in it. If she says something like "Unni! EXO just released their new winter album!" or "Daebak! Unniiii Healer has a new show!" I chime in with a "Whaaaa, no way dude!" She knows I'm not actually that hyped. But joining her hype train is genuinely fun. Turns out some of the shows actually have great cinematography and the some of the dramas have brilliant soundtracks. I now have a YouTube playlist with Korean music.

On days when life's exceptionally mean to my K-loving sister, she comes to my room and starts ranting in full on Korean as I gape at her in awe. She can even write a bit in Korean. This K-fan has made it a point to learn the Korean alphabet and taught herself to spell basic words. Some safe words that I've finally managed to learn so I can respond to her when she addresses me are *Arasso* (Okay) and *Ne* (Yes).

And I wish all the Korean stuff was limited within the family. If you were to meet her for the first time, do not

be alarmed if your normal "Hello!" is met with an "Anyeong!" I still remember this one time when she greeted a friend's parents with a complete 90 degree bow. When she realised what she had done, she embarrassed herself further by doing another 90 degree bow to apologise. So now I have to stand next to her and pull her shirt from behind to keep her from bowing when guests arrive.

However, all my attempts in being a civil member of the society fail when this K-fan and I decide to go out in public. Every time she notices remotely Far Eastern-looking people, she will eavesdrop to find out if they're Koreans.



If the result is affirmative, she will squeak and jump in ecstasy, while simultaneously following the said Koreans around. At supermarkets, it is a real struggle to keep her from trying to read the labels of every Korean product, and even harder to stop her from buying obscure Korean products when other equivalents are much better.

Given her intense admiration for the Korean way, pleasing her is a no-brainer. In the beginning, I had tried hard to not feed her fandom, but as the years passed, I believe I have become much wiser at taking care of my K-fan. Last year when I

took her to a comic con and gave her BDT 1000 to spend on whatever she likes, she spent the whole damn money on a single backpack – which is apparently very special because it's EXO FROM EXO PLANET. When Koreans die in dramas, I arrange blankets, warm Korean instant noodles (of kimchi flavour) and exempt her from all homework and household chores. She may even sleep it out.

Living with a K-fan can be a little daunting at first but it can also be amusing. Just like any other fandom, if you can remain open-minded, you may be exposed to a whole new world.


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