

The stages of reading fanfiction

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Fanfiction is a... difficult thing, to say the least, in terms of all the things you could feel while reading it. We've all been there (well, I HOPE we've all been there or this is woefully inaccurate); you've finished the story that you've been reading for so long now, and now that it's finally over, in your mini-existential crisis, you wonder what to do. Voicing your dilemma doesn't help, because you're well aware of the replies: "Dude, it's just a story", "Grow up", "Wow, what a loser, when I was your age I had a life".

However, then you meet that one friend who sympathises. He or she then speaks the words that will either lead to your salvation, or your doom: "Have you read THIS fanfiction though?"

And thus, you embark on your journey.

STAGE 1: DISCOVERY

Weary, wary, shell-shocked and lost, you see a glint. Through the haze of emptiness, you poke and prod curiously at what you have found, intrigue just barely keeping you in check from moving on.

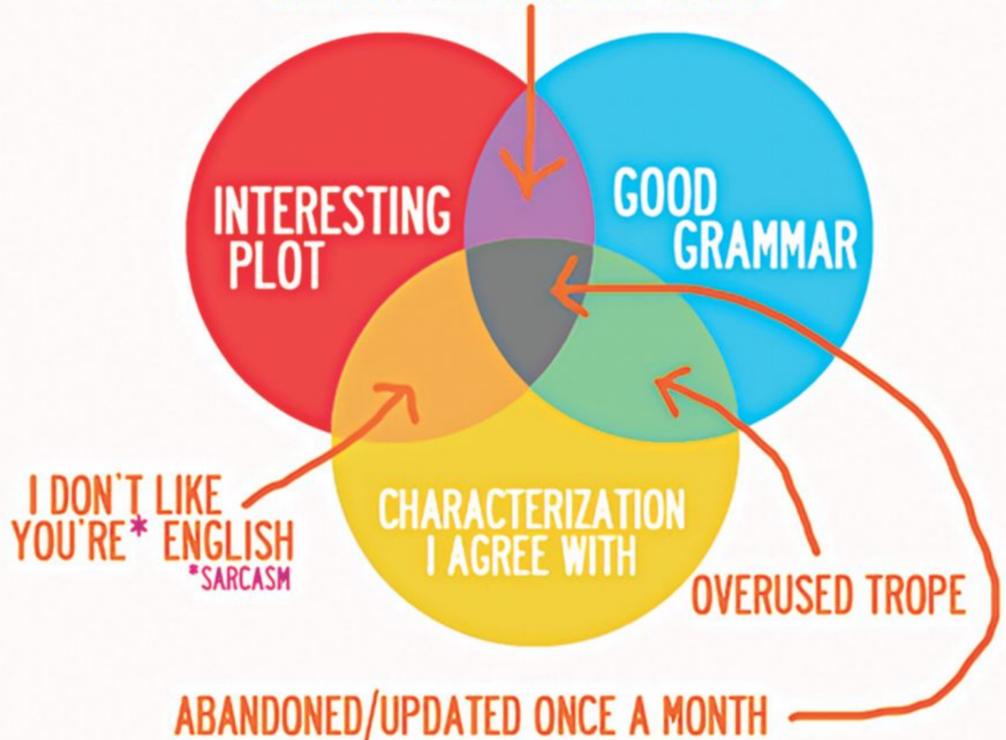
Understanding of what you have found evades you so far, but you continue to gaze upon it, a part of you realising its similarity to what you lost, already making comparisons and trying to point out how utterly ridiculous your interest in it is.

STAGE 2: INSPECTION AND DECISIONS

And so begins the inspection and that will lead to the question: "Do I stay, or leave?" You begin, and before long you realise how strange and muddled your findings are. You can't help but be horrified at how the beautiful story you read not so long ago has been drastically mutilated by a 21-year old with residual, raging teen-hormones. The only option left is to run screaming for the hills. Perhaps one day, you might discover something else, something less scarring and perhaps that day,

MY FIRST-WORLD PROBLEMS: FANFICTION

OH MY GOD WHY DO YOU WRITE MY BABIES THE WAY YOU WRITE MY BABIES



you will stay longer. But for now? The hills, my friend. The hills. It's best to keep in mind that this isn't the last time such an event will take place. In your search for salvation, you will be scarred over and over again, before you finally find something that will go against your instinct for running away. Unfortunately, this still isn't the last of your misery because whatever you've found may absolutely bore the life out of you, or seem like garbled junk that a sentient type-writer

with a case of "I'm terrible at coming up with a good, structured plot" spat out. No matter how hard you try to make something out of it, you realise that maybe you just finally have to give up. You've done your best, and it's time to move on once more.

And then, just when all seems lost and you're at the brink of hopelessness, you find it.

STAGE 3: OBSESSION

If your interest could be put down in the form of a metaphor, it's basically rolling a snowball down a hill and watching it spiral drastically out of control. The snowball is still cute and tiny when you first peek at your new find through the haze of emptiness that had been upon your soul ever since you started your journey. Your curiosity intensifies when you realise this isn't the equivalent of a literary garbage disposal

that you keep falling into, so you look further into it. It still seems a bit ridiculous, seeing a warped version of the things you know, but you keep going. The next thing you know, your curiosity turns to investment and then sheer obsession, feeling things you hardly thought you could feel. And sometimes, that's still an understatement.

STAGE 4: ENDGAME

The snowball is now much too large to control, and possible salvation draws closer with every letter your eyes pass over. Suddenly, you run out of chapters, the snowball smashing into smithereens against a giant wall at the bottom of the hill. Confused and dismayed at the lack of closure, you wonder what has happened. Then, your eyes widen in horror and a wail of misery escapes you as you read the words "Last updated on September 3, 2011".

The luckier ones have surviving snowballs that roll down the hill, gradually coming to a stop as the hill flattens. This is the moment when you realise that the adventure is over, the glint is gone, the snowball has come to rest, and painful as it may be, you have to move on. A perpetual cycle, you realise salvation and doom go hand-in-hand sometimes. You realise this is yet another bittersweet slice of life. Indeed, fanfictions are a difficult thing, to say the least.

Rasheed Khan won't get paid unless he starts to write decent articles that make simple sense. Send him tips on how to write at aarcvard@gmail.com



THE BOOK



THE MOVIE



THE FANFICTION