

A day on the sidelines of a food- blogger's life



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

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"Hellllo guys, today we're checking out this hip new place in the heart of the city..." starts Farhan.

"You're not filming right now. Stop mumbling, you camera obsessed weirdo", I say, shaking him awake. Farhan is my brother. My brother – the food blogger.

This is his usual morning routine, and my usual alarm. Dude mutters about blogging in his sleep. The first month, I'd ended up socking him in the gut for this nonsense. Then I realised that it was annoying enough to somehow be a more effective wakeup call than my phone's alarm, which I always slept through. After that I just let it be. Now that first "Hellllo" is more than enough to get me racing out of my twin bed and towards his, on the other side of the room, to shake him awake before he starts getting into his well rehearsed description of the juiciness of some imaginary burger. I hear the fries at that place are just terrible.

As I get dressed for work I can hear him getting out of bed and switching our desktop on. No groans. No grogginess. He's an energy machine from the minute he's up. It's six in the morning and the kid's typing away on his YouTube channel answering "fan comments" and who knows what else. I wish I had that kind of passion for my job. Hell, I wish I had that kind of passion for my girlfriend.

Once I'm done with breakfast and he has filled up on his daily serving of external validation, we set out. I'm dropping him off at his "job" today. His majesty spends most days at his videographer's house editing videos to upload. When they are satisfied that they have put together an adequately bizarre collection

of pirated music with their generic one dimensional restaurant review, consisting mostly of guttural noises from my brother's overstuffed mouth, they start off to film some more of the same.

Seeing as he's always at various restaurants throughout the day, I'd once made the grave mistake of asking him to pick me up some lunch.

"I have a channel to run," he said in the most deadpan voice ever, before strutting off.

The little punk barely made any money back then. And he definitely spent more than he made on all his escapades. But somehow my parents, having more foresight than I ever possessed, decided to "sponsor" him instead of listening to my suggestion of walloping him for his seemingly pointless endeavours. I tell you, it's the youngest child syndrome. They get to do whatever they want while we slag our behinds off and still fall short of our parents' mountainous expectations.

I was proven wrong however, and now, even though my hard earned university certificate is tucked away in a cupboard, that silver play button hangs on our wall like some glorious Ivy League degree. On top of that, I'm stuck on chauffeur duty. I drop him off at his friend's place on my way to work, and pick him up from whatever restaurant he manages to find himself at by the end of my shift.

Today it's Shamim's Steakhouse. However, when I get there, he has just begun filming. And now I must hang around till this monkey business is over. Fortunately for me, this isn't too common an occurrence. If it was, I'd have sabotaged his videos just to get him off my back.

Unfortunately, I now have to sit through my brother eating a bucket load

of food and reviewing it. Just to be clear, I'm being generous when I say "reviewing". It's more of an attempt. My brother has a total of four adjectives in his vocabulary. There are only so many combinations in which he can use them. I suspect no real eloquence is expected, given the fact that his views keep racing ahead with every month. I'm assuming people mostly watch for the food anyway. The alternative, that people actually find my brother's lame jokes and incessant hand gestures entertaining, is too horrifying to consider. Sometimes I worry about the future of Gen Z.

I peruse the menu at the restaurant while trying unsuccessfully to shut out the commotion my brother and his party are making.

"This is a peppered sirloin steak," he's saying, "with sautéed vegetables and a jacket potato. So we have a steak that you see here. Here's the pepper sauce. We have some vegetables here that have been tossed in butter I guess, and here's the potato, which looks creamy...it's got some cream on it. I guess."

Thank you, Master Obvious. Clearly this verbally rich mode of communication is lost on my brother. Every time he says "I guess" I feel like I've encountered a cardamom pod. *It's right in front of you for heaven's sake!*

Some might say I'm overreacting, but those people don't realise that I share the same blood as this buffoon. He makes me question my genetic makeup. Is there some strand in my DNA that will someday urge me to get in front of a camera and make a complete fool out of myself?

The production is quite ridiculous, and sometimes downright insane. He needs seventeen takes to get his "perfect"

one-liners out. His videographer is the one who should be awarded with all the fame in my opinion. The patience on this guy is impeccable. Everything on the menu seems to have been ordered. At some point what looks like a full raw leg of a cow appears at his table. Why the restaurant would ask my brother to inspect whether the meat is to his desires is a mystery to me. He can barely tell the difference between cooked chicken and beef at home.

At long last, the episode ends. The restaurant seems to have had a blast catering to my brother. A waiter hugs him for some inexplicable reason. I think I can hear the rest of the patrons of the restaurant applauding, though perhaps that was only my imagination. And of course I get to have the pleasure of driving his majesty home.

As I crash onto my bed after a long tiring day, I can hear my brother typing away at the PC, researching his next video, and planning on sponsorship deals. Whatever else he is, I can't say he doesn't put his all into this profession. I close my eyes thinking maybe he isn't a complete idiot after all.

Two minutes later my phone pings with a notification. I open it to see a message from an old classmate from high school who now works at a reputable MNC.

"Ai, isn't Farhan the Foodman your brother? He's an absolute phenomenon. Such talent! Can you ask him to review my restaurant?"

I groan.

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