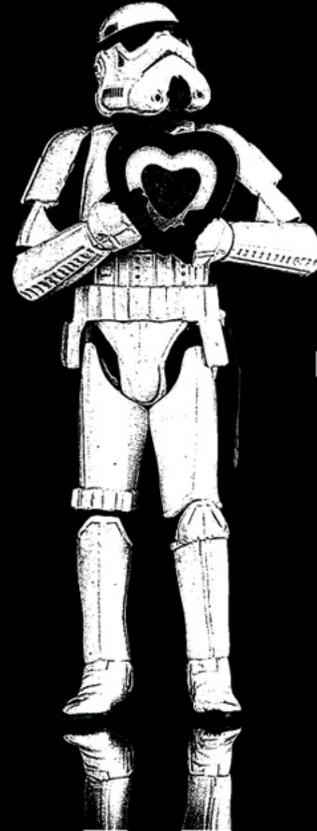


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**Fandom: it was love  
at first sight**

## **Fandom and I spent many years just missing each other.**

As a teenager, I discovered a battered paperback buried in the back of a Philadelphia closet. It was called "Star Trek: The New Voyages" and it was a professionally published collection of fan fiction. The idea that fans – mere mortals – could write the continuing stories of Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock was mind blowing. But I had to board a plane, the book was left behind and I spent the rest of my teenage years abroad and media-isolated. After graduation, I worked at soulless corporations and found myself wondering how I could trade my rolling chair and particle board desk for a spot on the USS Enterprise. No one at my workplace was fannish and most of my family and friends scoffed at popular culture, science fiction and fantasy. It was a veritable fannish wasteland. But in addition to being a proto-fan, I was also a proto-nerd and had heard of this new thing called the "Internet" and that there was an entire Usenet newsgroup devoted just to Star Trek (rec.arts.startrek.). But even though I read it every day, I still could not "connect" to fandom. When someone mentioned a book about fandom called "Enterprising Women", I eagerly bought it and learned that fans were not only amazingly creative, but that some female fans had even created entire relationships between the male characters. What

imagination! What chutzpah! What!? Is!? This!? Slash!? Despite the promising title, the book was written by and for academics and it did not include the treasure map to fandom's secret headquarters. Fortunately I was persistent and kept looking. I attended a Star Trek convention- the over-priced kind with the actors as guests, held in cold, drafty auditoriums with bad lighting and sound. Tucked at the rear of the auditorium was a dealer selling copies of fan made stories called 'fanzines' – and so I bought one. Not a slash zine (oh no, I was not that brave and besides the slash zines were hidden under the table and you had to know they were there to ask for them. Again, there was no map). But my zine **\*did\*** have a picture of a semi-naked Mr. Spock in iron chains on the cover. I took it home and soon I knew I wanted more. Lots more. Luckily for me, it was not long before a fan on rec.arts.startrek asked if anyone was interested in talking about "K/S".

Raising the topic of slash was quite taboo in public forums but I figured if they were brave enough to ask about slash, I was brave enough to answer. I introduced myself and discovered (a) the fan was local , (b) she was a she (most people online at the time were not), (c) she would be at another local Star Trek convention and (d)



so would the fanzine dealer. We met in person and I learned that she knew another local slash fan, who knew another fan who knew someone else who...and that is how I 'found' fandom. I ended up joining the first slash mailing list (Virgule-L) and have followed fandom's migrations across mailing lists, to the Worldwide Web, through fan fiction archives, to Livejournal and Dreamwidth and beyond.

I have written fan fiction, published fan fiction, edited fanvids, attended conventions, led panels, moderated mailing lists and LJ communities, and found (and lost) some of my best friends. And across it all, I have learned that fans are both awesome and annoying, dedicated and flighty, weird and mundane and pure crazy fun to be around. And now that fandom has left the closet and became more visible to the rest of the world, I hope we will continue to be crazy fun for many more years.

-- Morgan Dawn

### **Immortal databases**

I was twelve years old when I found fandom in computer class. There I was, learning the basics of Excel - or whatever Excel was called back then, I don't

remember - when I noticed something very odd. The random people we were assigned to enter into various formats started repeating names.

Scottish names.

MacLeod.

The computer teacher, who bore a more than passing resemblance to Robert Redford, was a friendly and approachable guy, so I eventually felt free to ask him my burning question. Who *are* these people? The answer involved a tv show near and dear to fan fiction writers' hearts.

Now, I feel I should flesh this out a little more. I was a twelve year old girl with a passionate attachment to bloody fantasy novels starring anthropomorphic mice. I had a long history of making up ridiculously complex and over the top (and, in retrospect, hilariously non-heterosexual) stories about My Little Ponies and the occasional imaginary frog, involving lots of unbreakable friendship, Machiavellian scheming and betrayal.

Yeah, Highlander fandom hit me like a ton of bricks.

I think Highlander was in its second or third season then. I caught the ever-present reruns on USA Network and fell in love. Sword fights! World building! Heroic honor! Friendships in the face of adversity! One rerun a day was obviously not enough. I fired up our new dial-up modem in search of something more.

I wasn't sure what more was, you understand. I think I was hoping for episode guides or show discussion. What I found was fanfic.

It was like a lightning bolt to the brain. You mean, people could just write this? And you could read it? It was like an infinite number of new episodes! Who wouldn't want that!

I immediately filled a disk full of high quality Highlander gen and brought it in to present to my teacher, like a cat with a live chipmunk. He was very nice the whole thing. Eventually, I began to figure out that most people, for some inexplicable reason, were *not* seized by the desire to read fanfic. Hunh. Obviously *they* were the weird ones.

– Grey Bard

## Fandoms I Have Loved, and How I Met and Left Them

*It's an old meme, but a good one.*

I met **Star Wars** back in 1999 when I still liked nice boys (watching young Obi Wan Kenobi at the cinema inspired me to go back and check out Luke Skywalker). I was really too young to be in a relationship and didn't really understand what it meant. We said we were married, but we were really just best friends who didn't need anyone else. I went off in a huff when it gave me the Mara Jade arc as an ill-advised present, then it came back in 2002, newer and flashier than ever before. Suddenly I realised that **Star Wars** had been really rubbish to me for a long time, and that this was in many ways the end. Besides, I'd already met **Lord of Rings** by then. But, as Carrie Fisher wrote in her autobiography (of her ex-husband, not **Star Wars**), 'we had good memories of each other', and so, occasionally, we do meet up and talk about old times.

I was a teenager by the time I met **Lord of the Rings** in 2001. I wrote a lot of really sincere, badly-spelled love letters, of which I am now terribly ashamed. My friends I already had all really liked **Lord of the Rings**, and encouraged our relationship. I wanted to know everything about it, and struggled through many long, boring talks

with its great aunt, the **Silmarillion** in order to find out what it had been like before me. After a while, though, I fell into the trap of trying to change it - I changed it so much that eventually it wasn't the fandom I'd fallen in love with. When it gave me its final film in 2003, I realised that I didn't even like what it had been any more, so we broke up and didn't speak again for a long time.

I met **Harry Potter** in 2003 through my brief fling with **Tortall** fandom. **Harry Potter** and **Tortall** hung out at the same place (the infamous FF.net – a site my mother, in a moment she now probably regrets, had suggested I check out). If **Tortall** noticed me sidling away at parties to talk to the newer, flashier magical kid on the block, it was nice enough not to say anything. At first, **Harry Potter** and I were purely platonic in our relationship, then it suggested various... alternatives to me. At first I was horrified (like Sandy in *Grease*, when Danny tries to fondle her at the drive in) but I gradually came round to the idea (like Sandy in *Grease*). If it wasn't as nice a boy as **Star Wars** had been, it was still good not-so-deep down and introduced me to some people I'm still friends with today. That we broke up at all was my fault – I went away to university and, though **Harry Potter** and I still kept in touch to begin with, we drifted

apart. When it tried to get back with me by giving me a new book in 2007, I was surprised and upset to find I really disliked it (and that it had ruined my ship!). The fandom and I hang out as little as possible now, because I'm still not over this, even if I do look at pictures of us together and sigh sometimes.

I will admit that I started seeing **Doctor Who** based purely on (David Tennant's) looks. Sure, I was also attracted to its nerdy-cool, but I thought it was kind of boring in person and so we didn't get together until it suddenly (in 2006) became very attractive indeed. We dated casually for a while, and I was just about to break it off, when **Doctor Who** suddenly became not just pretty, but sensitive (Human Nature), clever (Family of Blood), funny (Blink), and not a nice boy after all (Sound of Drums). Suddenly, I was head of heels, crazy in love. Even my friends who had liked **Doctor Who** long before I did became tired of me talking about it so much, but, unlike my other fandoms, Doctor Who introduced me to hundreds of its friends and I could talk about **Doctor Who** with them (*AN: All joking aside, this is why **Doctor Who** will always be my one true fandom. It was and is my social fandom – my girlfriend of five years and I met due to our shared love of Doctor/Master. The fandom will always be important to both of us.* **Doctor Who** and I





did things that **Harry Potter** would never have suggested (to me. I've heard some dodgy stories about other girls, though), but I was older and **Doctor Who** wasn't as asexual as it made out. Unlike with **Lord of the Rings**, I found (most) of its pre-me life really interesting, and when it lost its shine again (occasionally being stupid and frustrating in main canon and audios, but often just dull and embarrassing), I closeted myself away with old movies of **Doctor Who** when it was young. I still love it very much, and I suspect we will always be together in some way.

I didn't think I would ever meet another fandom I could truly give my heart to, but then, in late 2012, I met **Blake's 7**. **Doctor Who** and I hadn't agreed to see other people and I didn't particularly want to (brief flirtations with **Star Trek: TNG** and **Avatar:tLA** were exactly that – flirtations. My thing with **Hornblower** was more serious, but not serious enough), but my friends/my girlfriend who liked **Doctor Who** told me I might like **Blake's 7**... and, oh, I did. I do. I like it so much. In many ways, it embodies the parts of **Doctor Who** I liked best: it's clever, funny, awkward, passionate, dresses ridiculously, and constantly questions its own morality. The only problem is that **Blake's 7** is much older than me (the show ended on my birthday, four years before I was

born) and unlike **Doctor Who**, which regenerates, I really feel the age difference. Some of its former friends are dead, and almost all the others have moved on. I introduced it to some of *my* friends and I really like the people who've stuck around for 20 years, but as a fandom, it takes things pretty slow these days. I spend lots of my time reading up about its dark and sexy past in paper zines.

For better or worse, though, for richer or poorer (and these zines are shipped to me from the US, so it's mostly poorer), **Blake's 7** is the fandom I'm in love with at the moment. I can't see myself leaving it for a while.

– aralias

### **Hands on fire**

I was barely in elementary school when, at a relative's house, I watched cartoons from a foreign satellite TV for the first time. To this day the name of the program remains a mystery, but as soon as it was over I proceeded to draw portraits out of memory and wrote an outline for an epic novel inspired by the dramatic death scene I had witnessed moments earlier.

Upon returning home the next day, I decorated a cardboard box with pictures and words relating to this mystery program (and, as was obviously needed, I even had come up with a new title for the show by now). I thought of collecting related merchandise and curiosities in the large box, but felt slightly let down by the world when I realized there was simply no direction to reach out to. No one else knew about the show, and introducing it to anyone else was quite difficult.

Later came the internet and I while I was introduced to like-minded people, I never "found" fandom. I've always been in one. The only thing that changed was that there were more people, if one accepts the concept of fandom as more of a state of mind, rather than just a group of excited people.

Recently, while reflecting upon our lives with a friend I put into words for the first time that my life can be divided into slices, each with a label of a mania. Be it an all-consuming fascination and study of a language or a months-long incapability to discuss simply nothing but some tv-series, there is and always has been something to spark a fire in me. Sometimes I think I resemble a lighter to an almost sad degree - unless my fire is ignited, I'm of no use, no good to anyone, let alone

myself.

Fortunately I am a lighter that grew hands of its own, learned to stand varying weathers and found out there's no limit to refills.

– lida A

### **Becoming Fannish**

I discovered fanfiction early, courtesy of a glamorous girl a year ahead of me in school. I didn't, however, really discover Fandom with a capital 'F' until I joined the forums at Twisting the Hellmouth a few years ago and began posting my first and only novel-length work of fanfiction to that site. 'Knight of Faith', a BtVS/Batman crossover heavily inspired by Kierkegaard's philosophy, remains unfinished to this day - but starting it gave me a hunger to connect with other fans on a more personal level that fundamentally changed how I think of myself in relation to fandom. I became, in a word, 'fannish'. For example, in order to get a beta for the project, I started doing reciprocal beta work, and in the process found my first close fannish friend. I also found the courage to pinch hit for my first Yuletide latter that fall, and a year and a half later went to con.txt, my first away fannish

convention.

At its heart, fandom gives me the courage to try on selves more true to how I want to live my everyday. It gives me a sense of community independent of where I live or work, where I can come and go and always know I will find welcome. It is a home away from home, and an ongoing education in what it means to be a decent human being all in one.

I've grown increasingly fond of using the term 'transformative works' for fanfiction and other fannish creations. At their best, transformative works not only transform the canons they draw on for inspiration - they also transform the people who engage with them. I think in our own way, we articulate the change we want to see in the world, and there's nothing like fiction to bypass people's automatic defenses and oh-so-polite automatic cynicisms and plant possibilities where it impacts the heart.

--jjhunter

### **Fandom, and What I Found There**

Seventh grade was not a good year. I finished it out with

a single friend, who promptly moved cross-country; my parents kept me home from summer camp over a bad math grade. I was bored, and lonely, and had little but the TV for company. And then one day I caught an hour of television that changed the course of my life.

That doesn't happen often, does it? But *Buffy* was my gateway to fandom, and I don't know who I'd be if I hadn't found that community. Maybe I still would have found my way here without that fateful episode, without that chain of events-- the show that got me hooked, the random Internet wanderings that led me to a forum, the community of smart, friendly people who introduced me to fandom as something you do independent of a source text. Maybe I'd still be here, writing this. I don't know.

What I do know is this: because I watched that episode, because I fell in love with that story, I now belong to a community of people who love stories as much as I do. Maybe our way of expressing that is a little weird, to outsiders. Maybe it's odd that we devote so much of our time and energy to it. But I'll never regret the time spent, or the people met, or the stories read. Not a minute of it.

--nonasuch

