



ABC CLARION

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EXO

by Angelina Li

I am a very simple person. When I stumble on something I like, I become attached to it. I leech off of it. But when I find something that I like very, very much, I become obsessed. This kind of obsession probably runs in my family. My brother became infatuated with Rachel Platten's Fight Song six months earlier and still listens to it on repeat. My obsessions are very similar in intensity to my brother's, but they usually do not last very long. After listening to a new favorite song on repeat for a week, I will get sick of it and move on to my next favorite song.

However, my newest obsession has grown to a whole new level. Contrary to what my friends insist, I do not think that this newfound obsession is just another one of my phases. I believe it is here to stay. But do not worry, I have great self control! Unfortunately, I seem to have very large lapses quite frequently. No worries.

I was reading my school paper last week about students' reactions to Korean pop music. I knew there has been a recent rise in K-pop interest in the U.S., but I had always viewed K-pop with a negative stigma attached to it. I assumed it would be the Korean version of One Direction and a bunch of Korean Ariana Grandes, except all the boys would be very feminine and plastered with eyeliner. Reluctantly, I decided to give K-pop a try. After all, I had given K-dramas a chance a few weeks prior and completely fell in love with I Can Hear Your Voice.

The first group that had a lasting impression on me was EXO -my new love. EXO is a South Korean-Chinese boy band originally with twelve members. Within the band are two subgroups, EXO-K and EXO-M, performing music in

Korean and Chinese. The first music video that I watched was Call Me Baby, the Korean version. The song was very catchy, they were all very attractive, and the choreography was really rad. The choreography was even more hip in Growl, an R&B based dance song, my favorite of theirs. Along with upbeat songs, they also sing very soulful songs, one of my favorites being Miracles in December. They were a hundred times more vocally and aesthetically appealing than any American boy band that I had come across. I went from being disinterested in k-pop to being infatuated with EXO within an hour.

I literally spent every second of my free time watching their live performances and discovering their songs. At first, I couldn't tell any of them apart, with a few exceptions, and it didn't help at all that they changed their hairstyles and hair color with every performance. But as crazed as I was, within days, I could identify who was who, for the most part. Man, was I proud of myself!

I mostly listened to the Korean version of their songs, despite not speaking Korean. Through listening to their songs and watching both Korean and Chinese interviews, I was able to pick up a lot on Korean culture -the importance of using honorifics- as well as appreciate the beauty of the Korean language. Everything sounds beautiful in another language, especially one that I don't understand. In addition, the four Chinese members could all speak in Korean, and it was comical to hear the Korean members try to speak in Chinese.

Through watching the interviews, I learned how charming and funny the boys were -Tao is too scared to shower

Searching for Adventure

Photo taken by Audrey Zhou



alone in the middle of the night and SuHo is the "Mama" of the group- and was really deeply saddened when I learned that three Chinese members left and were in a lawsuit with S. M. Entertainment.

It's been over a week since I've been listening to EXO, and the obsession I have for them has not died down the slightest. With any luck, it'll outmatch my brother's passion for Rachel Platten.

A Page-Perfect Meeting

by Sydney Peng

I had to sit next to the mysterious, quiet guy on the back of the bus because of the lack of seats, and it was such a perfect set-up for a story that I was giggling. Only in my head, mind you. Otherwise, I probably would have crept him out, and with my social track record, creeping people out wasn't high on my list of priorities.

"Why are you laughing?" he asked gruffly.

Oops.

"I'm just thinking," I said, "that this seems like such a stereotypical intro for a story. You know, like a romance-oh, don't worry, I'm not hitting on you--or some adventure where one of us turns out to be a magician or something, or a contemporary where we become friends and form a squad and go road-tripping—I'm babbling, aren't I? Sorry. I'm probably, like, embarrassing you and I swear I'm more eloquent on paper and you know what? Sorry. I'll shut up." After that spectacular speech, I casually tried to sink into the upholstery.

The silence persisted like some itchy coat that you were dying to throw off but couldn't, because otherwise it'd get too cold.

"That's one of my least favorite story-telling devices, though," he suddenly said with a wry smile that wobbled in indecision. "Right up there with prophecies and farm-boys. And 'cute' accidents that spill coffee."

"Hah! You hate that one too!" I jabbed a finger at him in excitement and poked him in the nose, and his eyes widened. "Oh whoops, sorry. I gesture when I'm excited" --God, quit it with the explanations already, Maura--"and yeah, have you ever been on the receiving end of that? It's so annoying."

"This one girl spilled coffee all over my phone. That was bad," he said, wincing at the memory and probably the tongue-lashing from his parents. Mine would have flipped faster than a card in Egyptian Rat Screw.

"Well, maybe we should move onto stuff we do like," I said. "You know, positive vibes...yeah...?" He cocked his head to the side, hood shifting over, and I almost jabbed my finger at him again. "Yeah! I like cloaks. Add a cloak to some character and he or she gets, like, fifty-three cool points from me."

Sometimes I don't really know what I'm talking about, but luckily he didn't hold my ridiculous vocabulary against me.

"Cloaks?Fingerless gloves. They're pretty pointless, but they are really awesome."

"Yeah, yeah!And scarves. So stupid in a fight, but wow, do they look nice."

"Why exactly would you wear a scarf? Can you even think of a reason?"

"I dunno, you could strangle people, I guess? Seems like a garotte would be more practical there."

"The scarf holds your head to your neck," he intoned ominously in a voice two octaves too deep.

"You heard that story too? Ha. I laughed when I first heard it, the end was so sudden. And her delivery was so... matter-of-fact."

He imitated a fifth-grade horror aficionado. "And then... she took off the scarf... and her head fell off. The end."

"That was the extent of my story-telling abilities, I'm

afraid. Probably still is."

"You said you were more eloquent on paper?"

"More eloquent isn't exactly a difficult standard to reach, as you can see. Or hear, but you know what I mean, I know what I mean, we all know what we mean and I can never stop babbling and--ugh. Just tell me when I should stop."

Surprisingly, we got to the actual bus stop before we stopped talking. Despite my disastrous conversational abilities, we had a nice chat, and I was glowing a little that I'd actually found a friend, just like in a book. I wasn't literally glowing, though. Sadly, neither of us were magicians. Though we both agreed that time powers would be the coolest, fire was useless, and flight was overrated.

So," I said as I hopped off. "Talk to you later?"

He hesitated a bit, then shrugged. "Sure," he said, trying to sound casual and jamming his hands into his pocket, not giving any indication that he'd been yelling the loudest when espousing the evils of pyromancy.

"Ah, I got it. You've got to get the aura going on. The dark broody loner thing. No worries. Mum's the word. Your secret is safe with me," I said, miming a shushing librarian.

He paused, then sighed. "I hate that character archetype," he groaned, handing me his not-coffee-stained phone. "Here, punch in your number and email."

And that was how I befriended him and got involved in a mafia plot involving his homicidal mob-boss maid, a lot of soda, an AK-47, and a couple psychedelic fish from an illegal aquarium smuggling ring. I expected nothing less from such a page-perfect meeting.

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