

Notes on a Fandom: Fangirl 101 (Dec. 19, 2012, AfterEllen)

*Notes on a Fandom is a column dedicated to lesbian/bi fandom in its various incarnations. It will also feature thoughts and comments from you, the fans*

What is fandom? At its core, fandom is a celebration, an appreciation for a form of entertainment, which can really be anything: a book, a television show, a movie. Most importantly, fandom is a community. People who share the same interests, writers, artists, Tweeters and Tumblrs. All levels of obsession and devotion are welcome. Even if you've never considered yourself part of a particular fandom, we can all relate. We've all been fans of something, sometime. So, welcome fangirl.

And now that you are acquainted with "fandom," allow me to introduce myself. I'm a singer/songwriter/comedienne and I hang my hat in NYC. Earlier this year I wrote a little song called "[The Ballad of Rosewood](#)" about [Pretty Little Liars](#) and little did I know at the time that it would actually change my life. I've been writing songs about various fandoms ever since, and my vlog, "Dana Does it with Glee," appears weekly on AfterEllen. I've been a fangirl for as long as I can remember, and I'm proud to now be a (self-appointed) ambassador to the world of fandom. I've been thinking about what makes fandom and you, the fangirls who rule it, special. Well, it's a hell of a lot. For my first column, I want to share some of my personal thoughts on being a fangirl and give some advice for those just starting out.

Believe in magic, dear fangirl. Not just the magic that resides in Patronum spells and unicorn tears. The kind of magic that lives inside every truth, every song, every heartbreaking word on a page. Believe in true love, regardless of gender, distance, life, death or intergalactic species. If you can dream it, ship it. Ask to see your truth reflected back at you on television, movies, books. Tell those that create and shape, why it means so damn much to you. They may hear you, and sometimes it's their truth too.

Root for the underdog and believe in second chances. A vampire can win back his soul. A so-called loser will find a way to truly see through clear eyes, his heart full to the brim, and make the winning pass. And that destructive closeted teenage lesbian? One day she will find the courage to ride her bike through the rainy din of self-loathing and become something more than she ever could have imagined. And you will be there to cheer her on, to swoon and screenshot her every smile. You will occasionally be disappointed. It happens. It's OK. Your favorite ship will sink, your hero will die, your show will end. Your heart will burst with white hot pain, and you will cry and shout until you are hoarse. And then a new character or show will come along, and charm you all to hell, and it won't sting as much anymore. You'll never forget, though, because you are a fangirl and your memory is long and your Twitter feed even longer.

Rally, bitch and moan, but do so with respect, even if you are not shown the same in kind. Not everyone will understand your passion and dedication, especially when ego trumps civility. Save the torches and pitchforks for your killer Frankenstein/Buffy crossover slash. (Rated T of course.) Rise above. Make a GIF. Dance it out like Meredith and Cristina. Remember what made you love something in the first place. Be fierce. Never be ashamed to be a fangirl. Recruit. Tell people about your favorite ship, the shows that make your week. The characters that inspire you

to rise above the mundane, who jump off the page like they've been waiting their whole lives just to light a fire within you. Because they have, and they will.

Finally, and most importantly, there is no wrong way to be a fan. Just be you, and flail on fangirl. Flail like no one is watching.

*Every week, Notes on a Fandom will feature a different fandom-centric topic. Tweet me your thoughts on what you'd like to see covered, send me links to your Tumblr. I'll be including them in each week's column.*