

## **Being Basilisk, Being Human**

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Being a basilisk in a human body is, largely, a wonderful experience like nothing I have had the opportunity to enjoy before. As a basilisk who has only recently moved on from their previous life, my views and associations with the human body is largely different from my systemmates’.

When I first began fronting, I had a strong full-scale phantom body that I could not dampen. My phantom head was (and is) where my human head is, with the phantom and physical spine matching up with one another as a constant and form of “anchoring” and the rest of my lengthy phantom body extending far past the physical one. My phantom body matches the dimensions of my mindscape body and previous-life’s body perfectly, but at a more manageable size; my phantom body is roughly 15 feet long, and approximately two to three feet wide, while my ‘real’ body is roughly double that. As I’ve fronted more the phantom body has become less forceful in its intensity, though it is still always there on some level, and has not yet changed in its dimensions and orientation.

I do not believe I have what my systemmates have defined as mental shifts, however. I am integrally, constantly a basilisk, but I do not experience the same types of visceral instincts that my systemmates do. Mine are much quieter in how they affect me, such as my habit to avoid looking directly at individual, and the way in which I am easily startled by large sounds and vibrations. I also experience less of what I will define as “direct (species) dysphoria” than they do. Direct dysphoria is in reference to the dysphoria my systemmates experience by virtue of existing in a human body; instead, I experience seemingly indirect dysphoria, or dysphoria created by virtue of other, outside factors such as mirrors reflecting back a human face, or being referred to as a human by others. One could also argue it is the difference between cognitive dysphoria and social dysphoria, if those categories can be considered to be fitting in this particular case.

Operating a human body is, by all measures, a very lovely thing. The human senses of touch, sight, and taste are significantly more advanced than a basilisk’s, and the articulation of hands and movement of arms is certainly a novel experience as well. Taking my time to run my hand along a soft blanket, or a rough wall, or down my partner’s arm is something that feels as though it should be an overwhelming sensation, but instead is merely a pleasant, curious feeling easily handled by a human brain more than accustomed to such. My preferred tastes are more subdued than my systemmates’ and I find myself disinclined towards particularly sweet or synthetically flavored foods and drinks because they can be too strong for me, but still enjoy

trying them just for the sake of the experience. And sight is something I am still getting used to; everything seems to much brighter and starker than it rightfully should be, though I am hopeful that will lessen in time as I adjust.

Hands and their various uses fascinate me. The ability to touch and comprehend so much about a surface or object just from the sensation alone, and the quick-reflexes that such a sensitive body part can still demonstrate are amazing. The existence of juggling in particular baffles me, and I absolutely want to learn how to do it myself just so that I can. Writing and creating with my hands is also something I have found myself loving: where I am from, basilisks are known only for what they destroy and what they guard, hoarding away objects and locations for their creator's purposes. Having the opportunity to make things and share them with others is something I find myself greedily indulging in, trying to make up for a lifetime in which such capabilities and opportunities were well beyond me.

And language! Basilisks have no language where I come from, not formally: though we can understand spoken language and we can develop ways to communicate with others, there is not culture to draw from, no lexicon to create from the way we hiss or raise our plumage. There existing not one but an unimaginable multitude of languages to both learn to speak, read, *and* write, languages both dead and alive (and the concept of something nonliving being “alive” and “dead” in the first place!) is absolutely mind-boggling and I intend to learn as much as possible regarding it.

It's not as though I had no experiences with humans as a basilisk in my last life; quite the opposite. I was created by a human, tended to and cared for by humans, ate humans, and was killed by a human. But seeing something and imagining how they must operate, and experiencing getting to actually, physically *be* something, are two vastly different modes of existence, separated by a canyon of incomprehensible difference.

My systemmates have questioned my moral opinions and judgements on being human when I was so mistreated by humans in my past life, but in truth, I do not see the point in drawing conclusions about the greater morality of humans as a species. Humans are humans are humans, so to speak—I do not want to waste my time and enjoyment postulating about any species, humans or otherwise, and their inherent worthiness or lack thereof. Humans, like all other creatures, have inflicted both pain and joy upon others. They, like all other creatures, exist as best they can with what they are given. They, like all other creatures, have senses and understandings wholly unique in their interpretation and understanding to their species. There is nothing to draw from that, save that humankind is in all measures equal to every other extant and extinct species, sapient or otherwise. No better. No worse.