

## **Our Thoughts and Experiences with Cameo Shifts & Fictionflickers**

*Page Shepard 11/18/2021*

Cameo shifts and fictionflickers are a rarity in our system, something that adds to the spice of life but almost never ever really happens—in our system, only myself and Noel seem to ever experience them, with Drago, Dash, and Wyvern having yet to get to enjoy one.

Noel's tend to be cameo shifts of draconic features, like a shift in how the tips of her wings are formed or her horns, and usually seem to be connected to other people in the system. In some ways it seems like her cameo shifts are affected by co-fronting and co-consciousness, and the rare mismatched phantom body experiences are spurred by how our bodies and features exist and would theoretically meld with hers. She doesn't particularly enjoy these experiences and thinks they are, in her own words, "annoying."

For me, I tend to have deathclaw phantom body cameo shifts. I've never played any of the Fallout games, so it's unsure why I do and where these come from—I get the big bulking physique, the horns, the claws, and the tail most typically. I physically feel bigger and broader which throw me more off-balance than not, as my natural phantom body is either that of a fairly thin and long Eastern dragon or of a facultative bipedal canine. I don't get mental cameo shifts or anything similar in regards to this identity—I'm still a dog/dragon in my brain, just one that's confused and a little amused by the situation. I also haven't found out exactly what triggers these shifts, as they don't seem to happen in specific environments nor situations: they've happened alone, with people, outside, in restaurants, relaxing, while at work, and I just can't pinpoint what, if anything, sparks them.

My fictionflickers also seem to have no real rhyme or reason, albeit they are also rarer and thus harder to document. My most recent one happened just today and was of a Tobi-Kadachi from Monster Hunter World, resulting in phantom shifts focused on their notable back mane, spikes, and of their flat tail, but's been such a long time since I last fictionflickered that I can't even recall what the one before this was! I think maybe

Mightyena, but that's less of a fictionflicker and more adjacent to my clado-fictherian-esque Pokemon identity/feelings.

The Tobi-Kadachi fictionflicker today is what sparked this writing in particular: I wish I had some inkling of what made my brain spur on phantom limbs of one creature I enjoy and hyperfixate on, but not others.

I'm always an Eastern dragon and a canine psychopomp which is well and good, but it's absolutely fascinating getting to experience shifts for things that I'm not. It's a wholly unique thing, like trying on a friend's glasses and getting to squint at the world around me from an entirely new perspective: it's definitely not something I want to engage in for long periods of time, but being able to do it at all is an eye-opening experience.

And imagine getting to initiate it for specific species and identities—I've always been a bit affectionately jealous of the shapeshifters out there who can mold their forms as they please, truth be told. What a gift to have and what limitless potential!

I'm someone who thrives off of the hunt for knowledge, not just in the way of searching through library stacks, but also in how I want to throw myself into every experience possible, to touch everything, know everything, understand everything that I possibly can on a deep, intrinsic level. Just talking about it gets my heart racing! If I can, I *have* to know. And what is cameo shifting and fictionflickering if not the beginning steps to *knowing* something new through the experience of *being*?

I wish cameo shifting and fictionflickers (or, truly, any other type of flicker) got more focus and mentions in essays and writings largely for this reason. I love hearing about people's everyday in their nonhumanity, because how couldn't I? Even two people with the same kintype are going to experience the same situation in different ways and have different regular experiences regarding shifts and similar, but how often do we get to hear about being an animal from a separate animal's perspective—such as a wolf (therian) who one day wakes up cameo shifted with a phantom seagull body, for instance. Suddenly, wings! Potentially confusing on a whole different level than the standard dysphoria that might come from being physically human, and something I'd absolutely love to read about.

Sometimes I worry that there's an underlying idea that cameo shifts or 'flicker experiences aren't worth talking about because they're not permanent and therefore don't "count" or something like that. I've definitely seen those kinds of attitudes in community spaces, especially alongside hierarchies of identity, where people prioritize therian, otherkin, and fictionkin experiences and identities and writings over otherhearted, copinglink, and more general alterhuman content and understandings. And I'd just like to say that that's, frankly, some totally bull.

All experiences are temporary experiences in the maw of time, first off, and shouldn't be used as a metric for what is or isn't worth talking about. I'm of the opinion that every alterhuman experience is worth writing or talking about to some extent, no matter how small they may seem. First because they're amazing to read about and there always exists at least one person out there who will be thrilled to hear about them, and second because it helps to get rid of the pervasive attitude in some places that there's only singular, pre-defined ways to be alterhuman or certain kinds of alterhuman.

The hierarchy of identities is also something that we slowly (ever so slowly) see dissolving away in larger spaces as the years go on, but I'd give any amount of money if we could just throw the idea wholly away already. Someone who's a dog therian with 40 years' experience of wanting to sniff butts isn't better than someone who's cameo shifted into a dog for the first time ever and is experiencing the joy of wagging for the first time in their life. There is no "better" in this scenario at all, it's just two different sets of experiences, each with their unique importance to the individual in question, and thus why they're so important and fascinating to share.

I wish I had 'flickers and cameo shifts more often just so that I could write about them and nudge others to write more about theirs, too. The best way to do away with shift attitudes surrounding an identity or experience is to be vocal in your own spaces about it, after all. But my cameo shifts and fictionflickers are always there and gone within the span of a few minutes, like smoke on the breeze, and so rare that it makes it difficult to compile anything worth talking about. It might be worth looking into a more long-term project, keeping small entries on them every time they reappear with dates, time, environment, and potential triggers—that could end up as something very cool if I

worked on it over the course of several years. I wonder what patterns I might end up finding, if any.

And if you yourself experience ‘flickers or cameo shifts and have been putting off talking about them because “they’re not important, it’s not like it’s kintype-related or ‘hearted-related or attached to any copinglinks” or anything like that, then I’m of the opinion that you should definitely talk more about them. These experiences *are* important; anything someone experiences and finds interesting enough to share with others and talk about has inherent value that exists outside of any specifically attached identity labels. If you don’t want to write about them then don’t feel pressured to, but if you’ve been putting it on the backburner or haven’t even considered it until now, consider this a sign!