

The Encroaching Anjanath

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Does playing Monster Hunter games trigger our fictionflickers, or do encroaching fictionflickers urge us to start picking our Monster Hunter games back up? It's something of a chicken-egg question, but regardless of the answer, the end result is the same: I end up cameo shifted.

Anjanaths (including the subspecies, Fulgur Anjanaths) are the second Monster Hunter monster that I've experienced this with, the first being Tobi-Kadachis (but not, interestingly enough, the subspecies, Viper Tobi-Kadachi).



Behold! An Anjanath! (Image Source: [Monster Hunter Stories 2: Wings of Ruin](#))

Anjanaths look a lot like a Tyrannosaurus Rex in shape; while largely scaled, they have a fur pelt that starts with a ruff between their shoulders, extends down their back, and covers all but the underside of their tail. Dorsal sails are hidden in the Anjanath's pelt on its back, and only snap visibly out during moments such as sunbathing and when it's enraged. Anjanaths also have a large nose crest that they display when marking their territory with mucus, trying to sniff out their prey, or, like their sails,

when they're enraged. Standard Anjanaths are pink-scaled with black and grey fur, while Fulgur Anjanaths have light-grey fur and blue-striped orange-and-grey gradient scales. The former breathes fire, and the latter charges up electricity in its dorsal fins and jaws. Anjanaths are renowned for their aggression towards anything that moves, including larger monsters.

If you had asked me before what I imagined experiencing an Anjanath phantom body would be like, I probably would have said something about a T-rex in a China shop. But in actuality, it's nothing like that at all: although the body is certainly bulky, there's a sense of presence that comes along with it. You're not built for speed or grace like some other monsters, but you can get where you're going just fine all the same, and you're very aware of yourself and others. I usually don't have issues with people touching my phantom body while going about my day, but as an Anjanath I was hyper-aware (and extremely displeased) of every unintentional brush or touch. I found myself giving people more space than I normally would to make room for myself comfortably.

My nesting partner had a grand time exploring what sort of stimuli worked on the phantom body. Scratches just under the dorsal fins were nothing short of divine, and underneath the jaw to around the ear was also a pleasant area to be touched. The phantom tail and my throat, meanwhile, were very strongly "do not touch" zones. We both also noted that I seemed to find it uncomfortable to lay on my side or back, or to have my back up against the backs of chairs or against pillow piles; I'm guessing this is because of the fins and body shape.

As the shift lasted multiple days, I also went to work and was able to experience navigating through a bustling indoor and outdoor setting with a full phantom body. It was an informative, if unpleasant experience. I unconsciously avoided or tried to quickly make my way through tighter hallways throughout the day, and mainly stuck to more wide-open places or areas with tall ceilings, likely because of the discomfort of the large phantom body in a claustrophobic space. Hard sunlight on the phantom body would also trigger a desire to find a nice place to loaf, snap out my dorsal fins, and just sunbathe an hour or two away—an enjoyable instinct if I could have indulged it, but not something that's particularly useful while on the clock. The human body also, unfortunately, just isn't built for loafing.

But phantom body wasn't the end of it. I also experienced a pretty strong mental shift, which—unlike my expectations regarding the body—went very similar to how I expected.

During the course of my work day, I did not enjoy people being near me, or around me, at all. Anjanaths are asocial creatures that largely enjoy wandering by their lonesome, and I felt no different. Being forced to be around many other, smaller creatures all zipping and buzzing around made me feel aggressive, which came with its own set of instincts: to scream-roar (a very distinct noise that an Anjanath makes when enraged or engaged), to get a fire roaring in my throat and around my phantom fangs, and to chomp everything in front of me. I had to struggle to keep my phantom dorsal fins and nose crest down, an instinctual warning that wanted to flare up and let everyone know that **I WAS GOING TO MAKE THEM FUCK OFF BY TURNING THEM INTO CHUNKY SALSA IN MY JAWS** and something that wasn't productive to keeping myself some shade of calm. I was quick to anger, but I was also much more confident in my body language than normal because of a mixture of phantom body and large-predator assurance.

For the periods I was at home with my nesting partner, my mental shift was of a much lazier nature than I expected. I truly wanted nothing more than to eat and lounge. The Anjanath instincts were interesting in that there wasn't really a desire to hunt as I normally experience it: I mainly felt the urge to conserve my energy and was more than content to not have to expend any of it to go crashing into the underbrush for my dinner. Food was just another thing to mark off my internal checkboxes, comparable to breathing or blinking. There was also no desire to play or run around like I often experience as a canine psychopomp, just a vague urge to wander around territory I considered "mine" or "close by mine."

In a lot of ways, it was almost adjacent to dragon instincts that I and my systemmates have. Not quite the same, but close enough that it certainly reminded me of the instincts if they'd been filtered through a different lens.

All in all, it was an Experience. One that I would have preferred not to have had at work, but not one that I regret having. I've felt a kinship to Anjanaths ever since I started playing Monster Hunter World, when I was captivated by their T-rex likeness

and environmental interactions, and they have to be one of my favorite monsters by far in the game series as a whole. If anything, this all makes me want to embrace them even more as a relevant and cool part of my life, even if it's only in small ways. T-rexes are already uniquely important to me (being that my most cherished and last remaining childhood Christmas ornament is a golden Sue skeleton from the Field Museum of Chicago, my second-ever tattoo was of a t-rex skull, and I've loved the t-rex ever since I was a paleontology-obsessed kid), so this seems like only a natural progression: while Tobi-Kadachis, the other Monster Hunter monster that I've shifted as, feel much more innate and without being influenced by quite so many external factors, Anjanaths feel like something else. They're a separate, but valuable, fiction-based experience and pseudo-identity, tip-toeing the line between "hearttype" and "fictionflicker" when I try and explain what they are to me. And I'm excited to see what I can learn from being Anjanath, even if only on occasion.