

Notes for Writing Torei Tales

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All right, so you're a writer or a visual artist who is interested in Torei, and wants to get involved. You're a little bit daunted by the history of Torei, but the fiction or the images captured your imagination and you want to join in. Welcome!

I hope in this document to help you understand what Torei is all about without drowning you in dense history. So let's start within the nutshell:

Torei is a far-distant planet in a far-distant future, and feels like Aeon Flux meets Gor.

If you've never heard of one or both of these, that can make you think "Oh, I guess I should wait until I'm more familiar with that." Please don't feel intimidated by the references! It's just shorthand for people who do know what they are. Here's all you need to know:

What's Aeon Flux?

Aeon Flux was a rather dark and slightly kinky sci-fi cartoon series that appeared on MTV's Liquid Television in the mid-1990s. It featured characters in bondage outfits performing international espionage in a divided world. It had a feeling of a harsh desolate future made of crumbling concrete, steel prison walls, and uninhabitable deserts.

What's Gor?

Gor is a world from a series of sci-fi novels where female enslavement was the norm. Many lifestyle BDSM players pattern their practices after the cultures depicted in these novels, and you can find Gorean communities all over the world. The aesthetic of Gor is more of a bronze age fantasy culture, but the incorporation of female slavery into everyday life is what Torei borrows from the series.

So how do I make my work “Torean”?

All you need to do is set at least part of the work on planet Torei. It’s that simple! Let’s get into some more details.

What do I need to know about this setting?

Here’s the important points:

History

- Torei was built by robots tens of thousands of years ago.
- These terrifying robots still run giant ziggurats at the poles, generating the atmosphere in vast colony-factories.
- The only part of the planet with plant life is a band around the equator.
 - There are many nations in this ring around the planet, called the “ringdoms”.

The History of Torei has lots of historical details, if you’re interested.

Contact with outside

- Torei was not discovered by the rest of humanity until very recently, when most stories take place.
 - Humans from outside built a giant space elevator to make it easier for people to come and go from Torei.
 - * The ringdoms around this elevator built big cities and towers around it, like a big city appearing around a harbor.
 - This is so far in the future that nobody remembers Earth any more than we remember the name of the village in Africa where Mitochondrial Eve was found.
 - * Most people know that humans started in the Milky Way, though.
 - * Experts still debate which star Humanity evolved under, never mind which planet. It’s not a very interesting part of space these days, anyway.
 - Humans are the only spacefaring race!

Slavery

- All ringdoms have some form of slavery for women.
 - Most have a status called “freewomb” which is an emancipated state, but the legal system makes their lives difficult.
 - Most off-world nations have some sort of treaty status that allows off-world women to live lives as they are accustomed.
 - * Usually in practice this only works near the space elevator and its surrounding cities.

- * It's more like "right of clergy", where off-worlders are allowed to be tried in off-world courts.
- If you have your own ideas for how slavery works in your story, make up your own ringdom!

The Ministry of Truants

- Some ringdoms have an international police force called The Ministry of Truants.
 - Truant Officers catch runaway slaves and freewombs caught breaking curfew, among other things.
 - * Perhaps in your ringdom, they have different responsibilities!
 - Women *really* don't want to be caught by these men!

The Ministry of Improvements

- Torei has access to phenomenally advanced biotechnology, particularly for modifying the human body.
- The Ministry of Improvements is another international organization, with participation from the polar nations.
- An "improvement" is any body modification, such as:
 - Life extension
 - Survival enhancements for Torei's harsh environment
 - Sexual performance enhancements
 - Sexual performance *inducements!*
 - Slave control and training devices
 - Tattoos and piercings
 - Cosmetic improvements of all kinds
- Many off-world women visit Torei to get a perfect makeover unavailable anywhere else in the universe.
- Some women are sent to the Ministry of Improvements as punishment!

Advice from an author

Torei is a sci-fi world, but science fiction has some common sins that you should probably try to avoid.

Infodumps

When we craft strange worlds, there's a temptation to have the narration or some character explain all of the foreign details to us in a dense lecture. This is understandable! We've got a rich and vivid image in our minds of how the setting works, and we just want to show the reader that we really have worked it all out.

But there's a reason the :icontoreans: group separates setting notes from stories.

A story is about what the characters do in reaction to a situation, and in sci-fi the situation is a product of its setting. So focus on the characters and situation, and let the setting come in only as much as it needs to.

Where possible, technology should fade to the background. Information technology in this universe is ubiquitous and accessible in nearly all reflective surfaces. Imagine if every piece of flat glass or plastic were a fully-functional iPad, and you begin to get the idea. The particular ways in which ships travel between stars and galaxies should largely go unspecified. We care about who goes where and how difficult or long the journey is, not how many joules the engine consumes!

One good rule of thumb is to imagine how bored or annoyed a *character* would get at the explanations in your story. That should help you avoid “dark blue pants made of textiles” and “ground transport cars” gaffes!

Crossovers

I will confess I used to be a big fan of crossover fiction, in my youth. Part of this was the result of being a big fan of more obscure sci-fi, and finding myself wishing that more popular series were more like my favorites. So I’d get excited at the thought of the two stories *actually being set in the same universe* somehow, such that the popular characters could encounter my favorites.

I think it’s very important to avoid trying to bring non-Torean things into Torei. Torei will work best if you can meet it on its own, without trying to have Boba Fett or Bilbo visit.

Earth

Don’t ever mention Earth, if you can. Earth is gone and forgotten, and humanity’s realm is so much larger now! Try not to describe your characters as being from Earth, or even really having ever known it exists. What would you think if you read a story set in the present day, and every important character was from Angola or Namibia but referred to the region by a name that hasn’t been spoken for 30,000 years?

It is tempting to try and keep things simple by saying “My heroine is a woman from Earth”. After all, Earth is what you know! But how often was Earth mentioned in *Dune* or in *Star Wars*? Those settings stand on their own, and bringing Earth into them would be as distracting as having the TARDIS appear.

Instead, try to make your characters as familiar as possible but invent a planet that they’re from. You can have someone seem like she’s from Los Angeles, but in your story she’s from the planet of... *Angylion*! I just translated “Los Angeles” from Spanish to Welsh, which is a common trick of mine. Even “Torei” is just a Japanese word for “slave” or “slavery” that I mangled a bit. Google Translate is a great way to make alien names!