

So, You Wanna Be a Contributor?

A beginner's guide to the Tai-Pan Universe



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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in *Tales of the Tai-Pan Universe!*

Tales of the Tai-Pan Universe is the fanzine—a magazine produced by fans—of the Tai-Pan writers/artists shared science fiction universe. It is set in an alternate future where anthropomorphic Terran species and ETs adventure in a balkanized interstellar society. This universe—the universe of the *Tai-Pan*, *Quantum Lady*, *Iktome*, and *Ramanujan*—was first created in a hotel room at the 1988 NorthWest Science Fiction Convention.

I'm Gene Breshears, the Publisher and Editor of the *Tales of the Tai-Pan Universe* fanzine. Inside this booklet you will find the information necessary to apply for a Contributing Membership in the fanzine. This booklet also explains how to subscribe to the fanzine, how to create a persona character for the shared universe, and how to submit art or stories for possible publication in the fanzine.

The booklet doesn't contain enough information to write stories for the universe, nor is it intended to. Sorry, there is only so much we can fit into a freebie!

Please take your time to read the entire booklet before making any submission.

I look forward to hearing from you!

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General Information

Tales of the Tai-Pan Universe is published three times a year: March, July, and November. In the pages of *Tales of the Tai-Pan Universe* you will find the best anthropomorphic art and fiction available in Known Space. *Tales* aims for something between a "PG-13" and an "R-17" rating, though that is only a rough guideline. From time to time, stories and artwork containing adult themes may be published in supplements, though always handled in a professional manner (i.e., no sex and violence *merely* for the sake of sex and violence).

Our goal is to publish a quality fanzine, containing a wide range of art and writing, aimed at readers who don't expect to settle for second best. We also wish to encourage the writing and artistic talents of our subscribers when possible.

Subscriptions

U.S. subscriptions are available at \$12 (U.S.) for three issues. Send a check or money order, payable to Tai-Pan. Please specify whether we wish your subscription to begin with the current issue, or the next issue.

In addition to regular issues of the fanzine, subscribers will receive advance notification of additional special publications. Once your subscription is paid, you can kick back and enjoy the 'zine as it arrives in your mailbox.

Contributors

Contributing Members create the characters who inhabit, and the

planets visited by, the ships of the universe. There are two types of Contributing Members: Contributing Writers and Contributing Artists. To become a contributor, you must first purchase at least one issue of the fanzine, then submit a portfolio of your work as an application for Contributor Status.

If you wish to become a Contributing Writer, the portfolio must include at least one complete story—please do **not** write a story set in the *Tai-Pan* universe; submit any story you have written for another fanzine, a writing class, or any other forum. If you wish to become a Contributing Artist, the portfolio must include several pieces of artwork. Do not send originals! We can not be responsible for portfolios lost in the mail. If you wish to have your portfolio returned, include return postage.

If you are accepted, you will be asked to submit a Character Information Sheet, according to the guidelines in the contributor's booklet, for review. Contributors are required to complete a minimum annual contribution to the fanzine.

We do not accept unsolicited characters. Unsolicited stories (stories submitted by someone who has not been accepted as a Contributor) will be placed in the "slush pile" and reviewed when and if time permits.

If you have any questions, please write.

Rules and Regulations

1) Contributing members are expected to subscribe to the fanzine. If a contributor is unable to subscribe, he or she may make other arrangements with the Treasurer and the Publisher.

2) Only contributing members may own a persona character in the *Tai-Pan* universe.

3) Only one persona character per contributing member is allowed aboard the *Tai-Pan*, and only if a crew opening is available. Multiple characters are allowed aboard the *Quantum Lady*, *Iktome*, and *Ramanujan* as long as space is available.

4) All persona characters must be original to the *Tai-Pan* universe; no cross-overs with other universes without prior approval, and no characters which are substantially similar to a character copyrighted by another person.

5) Contributing members are required to complete a Character Information Sheet (CIS), Character Development Questionnaire (CDQ), and if requested, a Racial Development Questionnaire and Planetary Development Questionnaire for any persona character they submit. All character CISs, CDQs, RDQs, and PDQs must be approved. Contributing members are requested to only make as many characters as they are willing to support—as a guideline, one character for every story you plan on writing or illustrating a year. If you can not support additional characters, they may not be accepted.

6) If a Contributing Member leaves the project, he or she must make clear the fate of their persona character; any character which is abandoned becomes the property of the fanzine and may be put up for adoption by new contributors, or given a literary funeral.

a) all elements created by contributing members other than characters and personalities ("elements" referring to planets, ship designs, races, et cetera) are to remain elements of the *Tai-Pan* universe, with creator's credit to be given to the original creator. Elements created to substantiate a persona character cannot be withdrawn from the *Tai-Pan* universe.

b) after a persona character has been introduced into the Tai-Pan universe, the Editorial Board refuses to “erase” that character’s existence if the persona creator decides to leave or is asked to leave the Tai-Pan.

7) All contributing members must be willing to accept critiques; all stories will be edited, and multiple rewrites may be requested.

a) writers always have the right to discuss and negotiate with editors and/or request a second opinion.

b) The Publisher has final say on what stories and elements are published in the Tai-Pan fanzine.

8) Submissions from non-contributing members are welcome; however, all such submissions should deal with the Tai-Pan universe.

9) Plagiarism is unacceptable; plagiarists will be severely dealt with.

10) Submitting a story, artwork, article, character information sheet, or other piece to the Tai-Pan fanzine implies permission to publish the piece unless otherwise stated. Copyright belongs to the original creator. This includes:

a) photocopying the submission for purposes of making editorial marks, obtaining character use approval, or archival purposes;

b) publishing submissions in the Tai-Pan fanzine, Contributor Newsletter, Sourcebook, or other supplementary publications;

c) reprinting previously published issues of the fanzine, Contributor Newsletter, Sourcebook, or supplementary publications as originally published.

11) All contributors must sign a statement that they have read and understood the Rules and Regulations of the Tai-Pan fanzine.

Definition of Plagiarism:

Plagiarism will be dealt with severely. Plagiarism is the direct (and rarely, indirect) copying of another artist’s or writer’s work. This includes, but is not limited to, submitting a story or artwork created by another person as your own, tracing or copying artwork created by another person and signing your name, photocopying a story or artwork without the creator’s permission, scanning a story or artwork into a computer without the creator’s permission, or distributing such unauthorized copies (just because it’s easy to upload art to the internet, doesn’t mean that it is legal).

Overview of the Universe

The Tai-Pan universe is an anthropomorphic science fiction universe, though it tends more toward the space opera end of the genre than to hard science. Stories in the fanzine focus on the four project ships: *Tai-Pan* a medium-sized free merchant, *Iktome* a larger merchant/pirate vessel, *Quantum Lady* a large luxury ship (resort city in space), and *Ramanujan* a training/science vessel (a small university campus in space).

The four project ships ply the Gold Road, a sector on the far reaches of Known Space, approximately 300 light-years from Earth. Most of the worlds in the Gold Road and neighboring sectors (Silk Road, Crossroads, Spice Road, Spectre Loop, and Devil Dark) are former colonies of the Terran Confederation. The region is balkanized; many of the worlds are completely independent, others are members of small alliances of three to twelve star systems. There is no single interstellar government. Interstellar law is governed by

sometimes contradictory trade agreements and mutual protection treaties with no single interstellar police force or military to enforce them. (Sorry, no Galactic Patrol or Starfleet.)

Some of the planets in the sector are backwater worlds with pre-industrial societies. Others are medium-tech worlds with enough resources and manufacturing capacity to purchase higher tech goods from other worlds in vast quantities. And, of course, many are high-tech worlds with multiple space stations, an interstellar navy, and mining and manufacturing colonies throughout their star system.

The governments on the various worlds range from republics, to constitutional monarchies, to dictatorships. They include theocracies, autocracies, and democracies. The societies themselves range from oppressive to permissive. In short, all of human culture is represented somewhere among the worlds of the Gold Road.

There are several extra-terrestrial species in the region of the Gold Road, but most of the worlds are inhabited by the descendants of terran colonists. Most of those are gene-teched: humans modified with animal DNA.

Starships travel between the star systems through “jump points,” taking a month to get from one system to the next nearest star. This means that it takes between 10 years and 15 years to get from Earth to the Gold Road, and over a year to get from one end of the Gold Road to the other.

The fastest means of communication is to send messages on starships (Sorry, no subspace radio). Many governments maintain systems of unmanned “infopedoes”—small unmanned vessels that zip from system to system, beaming messages to outer stations, receiving messages, then zipping to the next system. This high-tech pony express service can get messages across civilized space about ten times faster than people, who can’t be “beamed” to the next torpedo. That means it’s barely possible to get a message from Earth to the Gold Road in a year. (Sorry, no Galactic News Service)

Almost all ships are equipped with artificial gravity. They use reactionless drive to travel from planetary surfaces and within star systems. They use repulsar fields to deflect tiny asteroids and micro-meteors. The most common inter-ship weapon is missiles. The starships are powered by fusion reactors.

Computers are ubiquitous. Most people own small pocket or wrist terminals, which function as watches, cellular phones, electronic books, information retrieval systems, note pads and personal organizers. Most computers can accept at least some verbal commands. Computers are seldom equipped with physical keyboards, but rather have a single touch-sensitive surface on which a virtual keyboard can be projected, allowing for the wide variety of hand sizes and shapes in Known Space. The smallest terminals, such as those the size of a wristwatch, would instead project a series of menus.

Available Technology

by Gene Breshears and Alan Chapman

We assume, in this discussion, that the reader is a lay-person as far as physics is concerned.

High temperature superconductors

A superconductor is a material that will conduct electricity with zero resistance. If you imagine electricity as water going through a pipe,

the larger diameter pipe will have less resistance and more water can get through with the same amount of pressure.

In electronic circuits, resistance will cause a loss of energy available for doing work. This energy is not lost, it manifests as heat and/or light. In fact, that is how electric heating elements and incandescent light bulbs work — they have a high resistance element that converts the electricity into heat and light. A superconductor, on the other hand, has no resistance so electricity can move through it perfectly with no losses. An electric current put into a loop of superconducting material will circle round indefinitely. In fact, in several advanced physics labs around the country, there are superconductor rings that have had currents circulating in them for a number of years.

Superconductors also have some weird magnetic properties. A superconductor placed above a magnet will float and a magnetic field cannot penetrate a superconductor. Another very strange property of superconductors is that they will remain the same temperature along their entire length. If one heats a normal copper wire at one end, the temperature will continually drop off toward the other end. A superconductor, on the other hand, will stay the same temperature over its entire length instantaneously.

The first superconductor discovered was a mixture of tin and lead but was only superconductive at very low temperatures, near absolute zero (about -273 degrees Celsius or -459 Fahrenheit).

By the time of the *Tai-Pan*, high temperature superconductors have been developed. These materials will remain superconductive at temperatures exceeding the boiling point of water. One thing we can do with these superconductors is make very efficient electromagnets, something that is necessary for our fusion power plant. Another thing that this makes possible is the production of extremely powerful computer circuitry, something like eight to ten of today's most powerful supercomputers in something like the size of a boot locker.

Fusion

Fusion is a type of nuclear power which takes light atoms, such as hydrogen, and fuses them together to make a heavier atom, like helium. The mass of the heavier atom is slightly less than the mass of the sum of the lighter atoms. This missing mass is converted into energy (according to Einstein's well known formula, $E=mc^2$). Nuclear fusion is the type of reactions that is going on in the sun.

This reaction produces incredible amounts of heat (the temperature is approximately 6000 degrees Celsius or over 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit). The main problem with fusion power is that no material can withstand such temperatures.

The *Tai-Pan's* fusion reactor uses magnetic fields created by huge coils of high-temperature superconductors to contain the fusion reaction. The reactor itself is the size of a small house and provides enough electricity to power a small town. In order to start the reactor, secondary generators must charge up the capacitors with electricity which is then dumped into the coil. This operation takes a couple of hours.

Cold Fusion

Cold fusion is an electro-chemical-nuclear process that is used to provide smaller energy cells. A cold fusion energy cell consists of a superconductive "sponge" of a particular geometry with electrodes inserted into it. Hydrogen is injected into the sponge and an electrical current of a certain frequency is applied. What results is nuclear fusion at room temperature.

These power cells range from about the size of a portable cassette player (to power laser weapons) to the size of a passenger van (to power some of the ship's craft); anything bigger is impractical and not cost effective.

Biotechnology & Cybernetics

Biotechnology in the universe of the *Tai-Pan* is extremely sophisticated. Most of the crew members are presumed to be from species that were "uplifted" (raised to sapience through selective breeding and a minimum of bioengineering) or "geneteched" (brought to sapience by splicing animal genes material to a base of human genetic material). This, of course, is the most obvious use of biotech in our universe.

Another way that people in Known Space uses biotech is for its food supply. They use a number of engineered bacteria to take a simple hydrocarbon nutrient sludge and water and convert it into protein, carbohydrates, and sugars. This synthesized food comes out as a grayish-white, nearly tasteless mass somewhat like a cross between cream of wheat and tofu in texture.

As a point of interest, in real world, 1990 America, a Navy scientist has succeeded in genetically engineering a bacteria, using the genes of a spider, to produce silk. The silk has five to ten times the tensile strength of steel, can stretch up to eighteen percent of its length, and is extremely light. Since it is manufactured by bacteria, which can be cultured at will, it will be extremely cheap to produce. Synsilk clothing will be the standard for any spacer.

Cybernetics in the *Tai-Pan* universe is obviously much more advanced than in our own. Specialists can replace just about any humanoid limb or sensory organ with a cybernetic part. Progress in electro-neurology has been made to the point that cybernetic devices can interface directly with the control and sensory nerves. Thus a cybernetic replacement would move and even feel like a normal limb.

Standard Propulsion

The basic form of propulsion in space is the reaction drive. This drive uses Newton's Third Law, *for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction*. The reaction drive simply throws mass one direction to propel the ship in the opposite direction. Primitive rockets burn some sort of fuel, creating hot gases, the gas molecules expand and are vented out the back at very high speeds, propelling the rocket forward. (Note: The rocket is *not* "pushing against the earth" or such to move, it is pushing against the molecules of its own exhaust.)

This form of propulsion works for everything from a "bottle rocket" to a fighter jet, to the space shuttle Colombia (and more). There are lots of ways to power a reaction drive. The simplest rocket burns an explosive fuel. Much higher technologies allow you to do such things as accelerate ions with a powerful magnetic field and shoot them out the "exhaust," use a nuclear fission power plant to super heat molecules and shoot them out, or even use a huge laser on the surface to super-heat molecules in the ship and accelerate it into orbit.

Even in an extremely high-tech fictional universe, many devices will use some sort of reaction drive for maneuvering purposes (for example, spacesuits), because they can be built extremely compactly and simply.

Anti-Gravity or Repulsar Drive

The term "anti-gravity" is a misnomer for a repulsar drive system that,

instead of applying energy to accelerate reaction mass and throw it away (as in a rocket), applies energy to produce a warp field that accelerates the objects in a desired direction. Both of these methods use the same amount of energy, in one way or another, to gain the desired amount of kinetic energy, but with the repulsar drive, one doesn't have to carry around the reaction mass.

On a planet repulsar drives seem to be anti-gravity, causing objects to float in the air. Actually it is a warp field accelerating the object in the opposite direction of gravity. Spacers usually call an anti-gravity drive system a repulsar or propulsor field drive.

The repulsar drive, when installed in floor plates, can also be set to accelerate objects toward it. This, in effect, creates artificial gravity.

Ships in the *Tai Pan* universe use a variation of the reactionless drive to create a "shield" or "screen" around the ship to deflect small objects from colliding with the ship. For a number of reasons, such a field is not extremely effective against large objects (say boulder sized or more) particularly when the ship is moving *really* fast. When a pebble-sized object is pushed aside by the field, the kinetic energy of the object is distributed evenly over the entire mass of the ship, causing no damage. Without the deflector screen, the object would hit the ship, concentrating all the kinetic energy on a pebble-sized spot on the hull, possibly puncturing it. When the object in question is quite a bit larger, particularly when the starship is moving at something like 10% of lightspeed, the energy is still distributed evenly over the whole mass of the ship — destroying the ship anyway.

Such deflector screens are therefore not terribly effective against massive missiles and similar weapons, either.

Interstellar Travel

Starships are equipped either with Static Warp, or the higher tech, more expensive Stutter Warp, engines. Warp drives take advantage of lines of force that run through hyperspace between the hearts of stars. A starship must travel under ordinary drive out to the far edge of a star system to reach the "jump zone" before the Static Warp engine can be engaged, or before the Stutter Warp engine can be powered on at full.

A journey through hyperspace is sort of like going through a tunnel. The tunnel is created by the stars, so your exit and entry points have to be near stars. Fly your ship out far enough from a star, in the general direction of your destination star, punch a hole into hyperspace, and pop out on the other side, light years away. Most of the journey time is spent at sublight speeds, traveling far enough from a star to initiate a jump, or traveling into a system after jump. The areas of space relatively near stars is well known, while the vast interstellar voids between stars are not.

Other technologies

There are many other drive systems which may be used in some of the lower tech systems, such as solar sails, fission rockets, fusion rockets, ramjets, and so on.

Magic and Psionics

There is no magic in the *Tai-Pan* universe, or at least no scientifically proven magic. There *are* rumors of primitive shamans with voodoo spells, or lost worlds where the natives use magic like the common man or woman uses technology, but these are simply rumors.

Psionics is another unproved yet rumored power, a thing found commonly in the entertainment world of holoflicks, but scoffed at by the common man or woman. (For all intents and purposes, we'd

like to avoid the use of both magic and psionics in the *Tai-Pan* universe. However, if you've got a good enough story...)

Interstellar Travel & Communication

by Gene Breshears

The *Tai-Pan* universe includes a diverse assortment of races, species and cultures which are at varying levels of technological development. Though most starships use the "stutter warp" technology for interstellar travel, there are other means employed.

Some basic terms should be defined first. *Starships* are ships which are intended to travel from one star system to another. Usually that means using some form of warp drive. The term *Spaceship* is usually used to refer to other space craft which are not intended to travel between the stars but are capable of traveling between planets. The term *shuttle* is usually used to refer to a craft capable of entering space but used primarily to haul cargoes and people from the surface to orbit and back again, without the capacity to travel to other planets. *Boat* refers to any space vehicle carried on a starship or spaceship.

The most important thing to remember about travel and communication in the *Tai-Pan* universe is that it takes time. A trip from a planet in one star system to a planet in the next nearest system will take between two and four weeks for a ship with stutter warp. The same trip will take months with a lower-tech static warp ship. Most of this travel time is spent covering a few billion miles of space at sub-light speeds to reach the jump zone where the warp drive can punch a hole through hyper-space to the jump zone of the next system. Then the ship must travel at sub-light speed from the jump zone of the second star to the inner planets.

The trip through hyper-space itself is nearly instantaneous, measured in the billionths of a second. Intelligent creatures experience it as a momentary blackout occasionally filled with bizarre dreams. Some species react worse to jump than others. None find it terribly pleasant, but for most its mainly an inconvenience.

A jump zone goes from one star to *the next star* in that direction, only. There isn't anything like a "transfer point" unless you are talking about a jump zone from one star with a habitable planet to some old red giant that has swallowed up all its planets, then around the star at sublight speed for days or weeks to the jumpzone to the world beyond it.

Jump drive can take you no further than 20 light-years, and that is for the big, military vessels. Ordinary cargo ships can go 10 light years — and only that far if the next star is 10 light years away. If the next star is only four, you can not skip over it to another star on the other side of it (unless the stars aren't in a nearly direct line, a separation of a few degrees of arc from the point of view of the beginning system is enough, but the jump zones would be millions of miles apart in that case, anyway).

The fastest way to send messages is to use a starship. There is no "sub-space radio." Most of the worlds in the Gold Road and neighboring sectors maintain a network of unmanned ships commonly called "infopedoes." These pony-express-type ships receive thousands of messages (personal communications, news, government communiqués, business correspondence) on a modulate laser beam. At the appointed time, the infopedo warps to the next system and transmits its data to the nearest receiving station. It will then receive data until it is time to return. After several such trips, the infopedo must be refueled and serviced.

A warp drive is expensive to run, so only the highest tech and richest systems send infopedoes more than once a week. Because of how far the jump zone is from the habitable planets in a star system, it takes around 20 hours for the data, traveling at light speed, to reach the infopedo.

Some of the practical implications of this are explained below.

Mail from Home

Sorry, but your character can not receive weekly boxes of cookies from mom. Such a shipment will take weeks just to get from mom's home planet to the next star system. A shipment intended for the crew member of a ship must try to intercept the ship. Families of spacers, when they insist on sending packages, will have the package shipped to one of the really busy ports (for example, Wilson's Rings, Jodhpur, Azerbaijan) and have it stored there in hopes that the ship will come through there. Depending on what sort of cargo a ship picks up, it may not pass through a particular port for years. And this is after the package spent perhaps months getting to the drop-off point.

E-mail-type letters are another story. Such messages can be simple text files like 20th century e-mail, or they may be graphic files, essentially a picture of a hand-written letter. Messages can include sound and video. However, such messages take up a lot more storage space (thousands of times as much) in the memory banks of infopedoes, and are correspondingly more expensive.

A digitized message is precisely what the infopedo network was designed for. Aunt Tilly can write a note, have it beamed to the nearest infopedo, and be fairly confident that it will eventually reach your character. It can be beamed across the next star system to an infopedo on the other side, and carried to the next system. Because these messages can travel slightly faster than a ship which will land on a planet and exchange cargo, the message, when it gets to a port your ship has been in recently, can be sent, via infopedo, to the star system your ship went to next. If your character's ship has left, that planet's "flight controllers" will know where you went next, and so on.

Even so, it still takes time for messages to catch up to a ship. A letter from Cousin George, back on earth, will take nearly a year just to reach the Gold Road via infopedo. Then it begins the chasing game.

This also means that news of major events won't be known to everyone in a short time. If a war breaks out on Jodhpur, it could take weeks for the first reports to reach the far end of the Gold Road. If the earth is destroyed, it will be at least eight months before the first report makes it to the Gold Road.

Character Creation

The goal of the Tai-Pan universe is to be a shared universe for collaborating writers and artists to play in. The production of the fanzine is a by-product of our playpen antics. While the universe is a still-growing canvas of exotic docks, galactic politics, pirate dens, smoky bars, crews' commons, and other such environments, the means by which we define it is through the characters which we create.

Your persona character is the lens through which the perimeters of this universe is viewed; every scratch on the lens adds its own shadow to the view. As such, your persona character is both a private and public creation.

Many of the contributing members are not "furry" fans; the characters are seen as personalities first, and anthropomorphics

second. The contributors want a "serious" universe; they want characters of substance, not cheesecake bunnies. Furry fandom offers lots of cheesecake elsewhere; we want to offer the world of anthropomorphics fans a diet that is heavy on the meat and potatoes. If you are a "furry" fan looking for bimbo bunnies in bondage, the Tai-Pan universe isn't an appropriate venue for you.

So, how do you go about making a persona character for the Tai-Pan universe?

Simple. First, read this *entire* booklet, with particular attention to *Overview of the Universe*, *Character Guidelines*, and *Physical Guidelines* below. Begin filling out a Character Information Sheet. Refer to the Samples provided in this booklet.

Please do not create a home planet on the draft CIS. The universe has over a hundred worlds already defined, and one will probably work for whatever you have in mind. Please do not create, even as a passing reference, new alien species without first getting approval from the Editor. Limit your creation to the character himself/herself to begin with.

Don't, repeat, do *not* fill out the Character Development Questionnaire and additional documents right away.

When you have completed the Character Information Sheet, please read the guidelines below again, and check that you haven't violated any of them. Send the proposed Character Information Sheet to the Publisher at the Tai-Pan address. If the character is accepted, you will be asked to go ahead with the other documents for the character.

Keep in mind that the Publisher may ask for some changes in the character before he or she is approved. Also remember that some ships have more open crew positions than others. Be prepared to modify the character accordingly. For example, if you have created an altruistic, heroic pilot, but the only ship that has pilot positions available is the pirate ship, you're going to need to either change the character's personality, or change her skill set to fit a position that is open on one of the other ships.

Unfortunately, the crew rosters of the ship are subject to change, as new members join the project, and current members leave the project, or write stories where they retire or kill their own characters. We can't keep an accurate list of open positions in this booklet.

You may submit revisions to your character whenever you wish, however, such revisions will be subject to approval. You can't revise a character to violate the guidelines after the fact. Also, if you want to make a radical change to an approved character, I'm going to ask you to write a story that explains how the character was changed before the new CIS will be accepted.

Character Guidelines

- 1) Make your persona character an individual. Avoid stereotypes and stock personalities. This is the most important factor—make a realist character, and everyone will be interested in your creation!
- 2) "Interesting" doesn't equate with incredible abilities. Neither does it mean "more tragic than anyone else." Remember this: a character is interesting not because of what he or she can do, but for who she or he *is*. Sure, a black-belt martial artist who is also a senior navigator, grammy-winning rock musician, baseball hero, multi-billionaire, neurosurgeon, race car driver, and Cajun cook who sometimes spends his off-duty hours teaching braille to deaf children is a busy, lively guy—but who'd want to ask him out for a

drink? (And why is such a wildly gifted individual wasting his time aboard a pirate ship, or [in the case of the *Tai-Pan*] an interstellar UPS truck?) Characters like this are no fun. Whenever possible, avoid the Superhero archetype! Remember to balance out the good and bad in your persona; often a character's weaknesses are more interesting than his or her strengths or skills. And always remember to integrate the character's past history and personality in the development of his or her skills!

3) If your character comes from Terran racial stock, study the animal type and use it as a framework. Every animal has its unique physical and psychological characteristics. Normally, you won't find a svelte Kodiak bear woman—they haven't the natural frame for it. And a three-toed sloth, even after geneteching, isn't likely to be a competition black belt martial artist; he wouldn't be physically as fast as, say, a mongoose.

4) Your character should be someone the readers will enjoy meeting again and again. Even if they're supposed to be a schmuck.

5) Leave empty spaces in the character's past to fill in later.

6) Think about the people in his or her life, past and present. Relationships over time are both complex and changing.

7) Let your character be moved by events in each story. He or she doesn't always have to be improved by them, simply let him or her grow and change. She or he can become more arrogant and foolish, or wiser and cautious—your choice.

8) Beware of having a specific ending in mind for your character when you start—you may reach it before you are ready!

9) Finally, be able to explain **why** your character has been hired aboard the ship she/he is going to serve aboard. Stowaways can happen only so often—and often aren't viewed kindly enough by captain and crew to merit a hire-on. Neither Captain Rasputin nor General Manager Pandango is likely to hire a heroin-addicted, schizophrenic, convicted rapist for anything, let alone a sensitive bridge job aboard the *Tai-Pan* or *Quantum Lady*. Captain Roberts may not have any qualms about hiring someone with a criminal record, but he's not going to take on a crew member who has been

known to fly into a psychopathic rage at any person who makes a sexual pass in his/her presence.

Physical Guidelines

1) The persona character must be an oxygen breather. Sorry, no methane or chlorine-breathing species, since none of the project ships are equipped with compatible life support systems. The persona character must be physically compatible in many other ways, for example, diet (if the character is violently allergic to normal Terran proteins, forget it).

2) The persona character must be capable of living with other individuals who might be of a racial type your character may once have considered dinner.

3) There are physical size restraints on all project ships. Most corridors in the *Tai-Pan*, *Iktome*, and *Quantum Lady* are 8' high or less (some work areas of the ships are a good deal smaller). Extremely tall, long, or broad species may have problems getting through doorways or standing upright. Most corridors in the *Ramanujan* are 12' high or lower (a significant fraction of the crew are anthropomorphic elephants).

4) The persona character must be capable of speaking and writing Galactic Standard.

5) The persona character must be able to provide the ship's doctor(s) with a personal medical history.

6) If the character is of Terran stock, the character must be a mammal or avian. No cross-species hybrids such as dog-mouse or rabbit-cat. If the character is an extra-terrestrial, be prepared to justify all racial characteristics from a biological and evolutionary angle.

7) Psychic and magical aptitude are not allowed.

8) The Publisher reserves the right to refuse any character.

9) The Publisher may choose to bend the rules for an exceptionally good reason. However, just because the Publisher or the previous editor bent the rules for someone else, that does not mean the same rule will be bent for you.

Available Races

Many races already exist in the *Tai-Pan* universe. Most are genetically-engineered terran animals, "furries" or "anthromorphs." If there is a specific animal you are interested in using from the lists below, you may want to ask for the existing information.

Furry Races

Aardvark	Elephant	Mongoose	Red Panda
Arabian Horse	Ermine	Mouse	Sea Otter
Armadillo	Feline	Opposum	Serval
Cape Hunting Dog	Ferret	Panda	Snow Leopard
Capybara	Gorilla	Polar Bear	Tiger
Cougar	Hare	Raccoon	Water Buffalo
Coyote	Husky	Rat	Wolverine
Doberman	Leopard	Red Fox	Zebra

Alien Races

Beta Starans: Superficially resemble feathered duck-billed dinosaurs (less than two meters tall). Beta Starans are culturally conditioned to be cautious and respectful of their society's expectations. Focus is on the good of the clan and the race.

Cobb: The Cobb look like giant spiders, complete with eight eyes and venomous fangs. Cobb are found on many worlds, their worker

and merchant castes being very active. Their biology forces a eusocial culture upon them, superficially resembling hive-insects.

Corvids: an avian race which bears a strong resemblance to terrestrial hawks. Most are very xenophobic, and the government only reluctantly opened trade with other Gold Road worlds within the last few decades. Most of the world is low-tech.

Eliothian: biologically, a sub-race of the Zylithians. The Eliothians

are the descendants of a military task force stranded on a terran colony world several centuries ago. The marooned aliens' culture have deviated significantly, now resembling terran society more than Zylithian. Elioth is a moderate-tech world.

Ikchiln: a reptilian race. They are slightly xenophobic and limit inter-stellar trade to their system.

Kilinji: An equine race, Kilinji have single-hoof feet, five-fingered hands, and a double horn sprouting from the forehead. Their society is very rigid and formal by terran standards.

Rhianians: a space-faring race which bears a superficial resemblance to badgers.

Virai Lirysians: physically similar to Beta Starans, it is believed they may be descendants of an ancient Beta Staran colony. The race is divided into classes determined by genetics, with a strict hierarchical system, though there is a twist. A member of an upper caste's social and political power is determined by the number of

Lirysians in the lower castes who have pledged their loyalty. Very xenophobic, the Lirysians only allow off-worlders to dock at restricted stations. No off-worlder has ever set foot on the Lirysian homeworld.

Zenian Constrictors: snake-like race created by dolphin colonists by geneteching a pre-sapient creature native to one of the colony worlds, the Zenians are 9 to 12 meters long and usually fitted with cybernetic implants to control mechanical arms or other devices. The Zenians rebelled, winning their independence, two centuries ago.

Zylithians: a warm-blooded race which superficially resembles terran reptiles. They are a space-faring race whose culture has encompassed an unknown amount of space. There is a very communal society in which individuality is not only forbidden, it has nearly been bred out of the race. The Zylithians and Terran colonies waged war centuries ago, and some hostilities still exist on the border areas.

Character Information Sheet
for the *Tai-Pan* Universe

Persona:

Persona Creator:

Name:

Genetic Type:

Origin:

Ship Name:

Occupation:

Gender:

Age / Racial Average:

Height:

Build & Weight:

Hair/Pelt/Markings:

Eyes:

Racial Abilities & Characteristics:

Voice Quality & Speech Mannerisms:

Diet:

Dress:

Special Possessions:

Skills:

Hobbies/Pastimes:

Family:

Closest Friends:

Sexual Relations:

Personal History:

Personal Information & Personality Traits:

Character Development Questionnaire

Tai-Pan Universe

1. Describe four things you like very much.
2. Describe four things you dislike very much.
3. How do you feel about your preferred sex, and sexual relations in general?
4. How do you feel about gambling?
5. How do you feel about alcohol?
6. What is your philosophy of life?
7. If you could have any tangible thing, what would it be?
8. Do you have any physical difficulties?
9. Did you have a happy childhood?
10. Describe the childhood event which most affected you.
11. How do you think others react to you as a person?
12. What kind of education have you had?
13. What are you proudest of?
14. What is your deepest fear?
15. How do you feel about food, and what kinds of food do you prefer?
16. What do you dream about?
17. What makes you angry? How do you react when you're angry?
18. What do you try hardest to avoid?
19. What are you most ashamed of?
20. How religious are you?
21. How athletic are you?
22. How methodical are you?
23. What is your usual approach to a problem?
24. What are your chief taboos?
25. Describe a situation where you feel you have behaved courageously.
26. Do you see yourself as a loving person?
27. How artistic are you?
28. How do you feel about money?
29. How do you feel about material things?
30. What are your plans for the future?
31. How idealistic are you?
32. How realistic are you?
33. How successful are you?
34. Name the four things you most often object to in other people.
35. Name the four things you most often object to in yourself.
36. How gullible are you?
37. How intelligent are you?
38. Do you believe that the end justifies the means?
39. How attractive are you physically?
40. Do you believe that there is anything worth dying for? What experiences led you to this conclusion?
41. What do you worry about most?
42. How do you feel about violence? Under what circumstances would you kill another sentient being, and how does killing others affect you?
43. What makes life worth living for you?
44. What is the difference between good and evil?
45. What kind of person would you most like to be?
46. What do you consider to be worth knowing?
47. How do you feel about the Tai-Pan/Iktome/Ramanujan/Quantum Lady, and how she is operated?
48. What types of music do you enjoy?
49. What types of literature/entertainment do you enjoy?
50. What person do you think has had the most influence on you and your life?

Racial Development Questionnaire

Tai-Pan Universe

This questionnaire is designed to contain information concerning various aliens or bio-engineered anthropomorphic races; it is not intended to contain information about specific characters/persons, but rather the race as a whole. Answers need not be lengthy, but please consider your answers thoroughly and respond with some detail.

Race: (the common name used for the form)

Origin: (original genetic base animal used for tech or uplift, and method, i.e. biotech or uplift):

Bio engineering history: (why, how, where form was originally designed and any accompanying history):

Approximate lifespan:

General build: (include species size-range)

Manipulation/digits:

Digitigrade or plantigrade:

Skin/Pelt:

Eyes: (color ranges and shape tendency)

Vocal range/quality:

Typical speech patterns:

Diet:

Special Health Concerns:

Skill tendencies: (as per outstanding physical capabilities)

Genders: (genders that appear within race)

Socio-sexual info: (any information concerning the ways the race deals with sexual issues; also, length of gestation, average number of young per litter, etc.)

Basic social groupings: (general group/family structure, though there'll be deviation within any society)

Basic social philosophy: (how/what do they think about life)

Basic social/racial fondnesses/antipathies: (anything that most of the race seems to like or dislike -- for instance, koala forms being fond of eucalyptus; need not be food, however -- can be activities, etc.)

Sample Character Information Sheet

F. J. McQuarrie, *Tai-Pan* Chief Engineer

Name: F. J. "Mac" McQuarrie

Author: Gene Breshears

Species: 'Rillaform (Gorilla sapiens)

Genetic Base: Gorilla Gorilla

Gender: male

Age: 50-ish

Age Expectancy: 140

Planet/System of Origin: Terra/Sol

City/Country: Edinborough/Scotland

Height: 5'6" (when knuckle-walking). After he loses his legs, he keeps the grav platform at his familiar height.

Build: As the typical lowland gorilla — skull is crested, wide shoulders, low hips, and long, swayed back. Weighs about 520 lbs.

Hair/Pelt: longish black fur, beginning to fade to silver-grey on his back.

Eyes: dark brown

Voice Quality: very deep and resonant (gorillas have natural resonating chambers in their chests, there are many famous basso profundo gorilla vocalists). Speech patterns are exactly like Scotty on the original Star Trek.

Race Characteristics: Gorilla gorilla has an extended family structure. In general, they consist of a group of up to 20 adults who share child-rearing responsibilities and are usually dominated by one older male. The bio-engineers didn't do anything to modify this structure, so Gorilla Sapiens has retained a form of it.

Gorilla Sapiens are polygamous. Families are usually dominated by the elder gorilla with the most outgoing personality. Males have a genetic tendency to fill this role, but a significant number of females have done so. Male gorillas tend to think of all children in their extended family as their own — regardless of who the biological father was. Similarly, young gorillas think of all the children in their extended family as brothers and sisters — again, regardless of actual parentage.

Gorilla sapiens is primarily vegetarian, but can eat small amounts of meat. McQuarrie prefers vegetables, but is especially fond of escargot (though he doesn't admit it often).

Sexual Stuff: McQuarrie will chuckle at sexual jokes (unless they're at someone's expense), but doesn't talk much about sex. As far as most of the crew members know, he's never had an affair while he's been on the *Tai Pan*. He may wander off on his own on planet sometimes. He's not judgmental about others' sexual practices, he just doesn't talk about his own. His philosophy is very open minded; everyone should be able to do what they want as long as nobody's getting hurt. Doesn't understand it when people get upset about other people's sexual preferences... finds it all sort of amusing. He wishes everybody had the attitudes toward sex that cetaforms holds, although "sometimes they go overboard a little bit."

Parents: Birth-mother: Megan McQuarrie, an Associate Professor of Hyperspatial Physics at Edinborough University. She's been involved in several major research projects. A very active woman; always on the go and enthusiastic. Intelligent and thoughtful, always analyzing

some problem or other.

Mother Bridgett taught History at Edinborough University; Eileen taught Biochemistry at Heriott-Watt University; Karen is a surgeon; Gwendoline is a chef; Maureen used to play cello professionally, but retired from the symphony to keep the children out of trouble; Sonya was a barrister, but was another one who retired to look after the kids.

Birth-father: McQuarrie isn't sure who his genetic father is (note, there is no stigma attached to this in Gorilla Sapiens). The actual sexual relations within a gorilla group family are often very private, and all the men take responsibility for all the children, no matter what. His many fathers were very busy men with far flung careers that kept them away a great deal. Fathers: Robert taught literature at the University of Edinborough; William taught Theology at St. Andrews College in Edinborough; Montgomery taught Theology at St. Andrews also; Brian was the Artistic Director of the Reid Orchestra in Edinborough; Gordon was a barrister; Cedric was in the Terran Confederation Diplomatic Corps, eventually posted as Ambassador to the Commonwealth of New Albion when McQuarrie was a teenager; James was a gardener, and was one of the parents who stopped working outside the home to take care of the kids; Scott writes, mostly philosophy and political commentary.

Head of the clan: this position was held by his grandfather Ian when McQuarrie left Terra. He's not sure who holds it now.

Siblings: To name but a few:

Sisters: Brianna, Hanna, Kathrina,, Margaret, Anne, Lana, Lorin, Mary, Darlene, Rachel, Thea, Gillian.

Brothers: Leslie, Robert, James, Devin, Walter, Richard, Andrew, William, Robin, Jonathan, Sydney, Hugh, Reuben.

Most of his siblings are professors at various universities and colleges. Robin is studying opera. Rachel is studying sociology and Alien Contact/Relations.

Other Family: Grandfather Ian, Uncle Gavin. Myriad others.

Occupation/Rank: Chief Engineer.

Skills: a master of fusion engineering, electronic and mechanical repair. Can operate various vehicles — wheeled ground, outer hull bugs, etc. Can pilot a shuttle, but doesn't think he's very good at it. Knows a lot about brewing spirits. A good vocalist (he's shy about that one) and whistler. Has other skills, as he puts it, "...this and that..."

Hobbies: McQuarrie likes collecting science texts, particularly those having to do with hyperspatial mathematics or fusion physics. He also has an odd collection of musical plays on video disk (or whatever the high tech version of that is). Among his collection are multiple productions of every Gilbert & Sullivan musical. McQuarrie frequently whistles, hums and even quietly sings his favorite snatches of songs from the musicals. He has a small collection of hard-copy books, but most of his library is on disk.

If anyone gets real nosy, they'll find an old, worn, leather-bound copy of a complete annotated Gilbert & Sullivan. Written on the inside cover: "With all my love forever, Fiona."

Other items they might find in his stuff: pictures of him in the Pipe and Drum Corps at St. Georges, a hardcover edition of "A History of

Uplift," written by his mother, Bridgett, reproductions of Terran authors Asimov's "The Human Brain," Sagan's "The Dragons of Eden," and "Broca's Brain" and the Jhodpurian author Chandrasaekar's "Rationality and Remembrance." He has an old map of Scotland on his wall, with the clans defined by region. A completely useless (for navigation) star chart (as seen from Terra) also hangs on his wall. Mechanical and engineering drawings dot the walls; a strange mix, whatever he thinks looks neat: a can opener, an interstellar battleship, etc.

Outfits: Usually wears mechanic coveralls while on duty, Tai Pan patch on one shoulder, the Terran Scottish flag on the other. Off duty, will wear loose-fitting, tie at the waist pants and goes barefoot where its safe (per-accident). Casual occasions he'll wear a kilt.

Jewelry: none

McQuarrie's Family: For reasons which have since become unclear, a large number of Gorilla Sapiens clans adopted the Scottish culture as their model. To be sure, there are a vast number of other cultures which various Gorilla clans have adopted.

Gorilla Clan McQuarrie has an old, honored history. It's members have included university professors, award-winning authors and distinguished stage actors.

Dr. Megan McQuarrie, McQuarrie's birth-mother, is a moderately famous (in scientific circles) professor and research scientist. His Uncle Gavin is a renowned Shakespearean actor, whose definitive portrayal of Othello has been proclaimed across inhabited space. His other parents include: a Professor of Literature, a Professor of Biochemistry, two Professors of Theology, a Professor of History, a Surgeon, an Ambassador, and a Philosopher. McQuarrie's siblings have mostly all gone into similar careers.

Though the family as a whole was a bit surprised at his decision to study an Engineering field, only his birth-mother became angry. She has refused to speak with him since he began his space-faring career. He makes a point of writing her three times each year: her birthday, Mother's Day, and Christmas. The rest of the family, mostly to keep on her good side, have remained silent since then. Only his grandfather, Ian (a retired professor of Mathematics and an amateur Cosmologist) stays in close contact, frequently sending communiqués to ports the Tai Pan is known to frequent, and always

looking forward to McQuarrie's letters.

Personal History: McQuarrie's mother was livid when he signed-on as an engineer's assistant on the trader *Jason's Folly*, instead of going to graduate school. He met Rasputin during a shore leave on his first voyage, and the two eventually became good buddies.

When Rasputin got his own ship (under circumstances which neither Eli, McQuarrie nor Rasputin will speak of), McQuarrie became his engineer.

McQuarrie is reaching the age where his genetic clock is yelling: "Settle down! Have kids!" He's trying to pretend it's not happening. His subconscious is dealing with it by adopting the crew as his kids. He had a special fondness for Mit chia. He's going to become extremely aggressive after the attack, with all his family instincts kicked into high gear.

McQuarrie's first and middle names are subject to much speculation. Of the *Tai Pan* crew, only Rasputin knows what the initials stand for. Even the ship's records, and whatever space agencies register such things, list him as "McQuarrie, F.J." If asked his name, McQuarrie replies, "McQuarrie, call me Mac."

Personal Information: Speech patterns exactly like Scotty of Star Trek. Temperament is similar, as well. He loves scotch whisky and has been know to cobble together a still in the engineering room when his supply runs low. Essentially, just write him like Scotty, and you've got it. Has a tendency to whistle tunes from musicals, his favorites are Gilbert & Sullivan comedies.

Although he prefers playing with his engines, power plants and control systems over sight-seeing, he loves a good night of drinking on shore leave. Ordinarily sedate and mildly jolly, he becomes a nasty fighter when he losses his temper, which usually only happens if someone insults someone he cares for, or the *Tai-Pan* itself. Normally easy-going, though he'll resort to sarcastic barbs sometimes. Though he's decent at most card games, he's never quite mastered the subtleties of Bridge.

His bed is surrounded by plants that, if it weren't for Stan's care and diligence, would have died long ago (to sleep comfortably, gorillas have to be surrounded by greens and able to make anest).

Sample Character Development Questionnaire

Gaitz, *Tai-Pan* First Mate
by Viki Sinex

1. Describe four things you like very much. I like a challenging task. I like relaxing in my quarters with the lights dimmed, listening to my favorite music. I like wood burning fireplaces, open fires. I like pizza. I like having a few really close friends who I can be myself with.

2. Describe four things you dislike very much. I dislike bureaucracy; I've been known to intimidate people in order to get around it. I'm not fond of being wet for any length of time--I don't swim, for example. I hate having to lie to anyone about anything. I know sometimes it has to be done, but it doesn't come easily to me. And I DON'T LIKE being ill!

3. How do you feel about your preferred sex, and sexual relations in general? I think females are wonderful. I like them a lot. I'm not like Chester about it, thank the Greater Beings, but I do

enjoy their company. Some of my best friends... Seriously, though. All my life I think a greater percentage of my friends have been female. They're fun to hold. [swings both ears back and tries to look innocent] I didn't say that. [grins] I don't tend to be very forward with people I don't know, but I'm working on that. I've had relationships with ladies that I'd known for a while, which I prefer. Mating with strangers [shakes head] doesn't suit me.

4. How do you feel about gambling? I love it, in moderation. I know when to quit. They tell me that it's not really gambling when you're not game to take everything and bet it again. I'm game until it's not fun, then I don't game anymore. I like playing cards with Stan (Elkins). He plays using Oreo cookies. Best plan yet.

5. How do you feel about alcohol? I like to carry it around. I always have a glass in my hand, it seems, but I don't consume nearly as

much as people think I do. That's why I like really dark beer, like porter; it's served at room temp and it tastes best that way. I can carry a pint around for an hour and a half and it still tastes good. I drink whisky neat for the same reason. My glass doesn't always contain alcohol, either. [hands me the glass in his hand at the moment. It's warm to touch. I smell the aroma, grin and take a sip.]

It's tea.

Darjeeling. [takes his glass back when I hand it to him.] I've had my binges, and I hold my alcohol rather well, but we all grow up eventually.

6. What is your philosophy of life? That life is about philosophy. I could keep you here indefinitely answering that one.

7. If you could have any tangible thing, what would it be?

I... [shakes head]... I don't know. No, I'm coming up with intangibles, abilities. [laughs] Lips? [tries to make a moue with what he's got]

8. Do you have any physical difficulties? No, not really. [pauses, tries to make a moue]

9. Did you have a happy childhood? I was the only child of spacer parents; I got to do pretty much what I wanted. Followed people around asking pesty questions, but I was a good kid. Yes, I'd have to say I was contented, over all.

10. Describe what childhood event which most affected you. It's not a single incident, but the fact that I grew up in space. It's affected the whole way I carry on, I would imagine. I think I'd get itchy if I tried to spend any length of time planet-bound.

11. How do you think others react to you as a person? That's a hard one to answer. Personally, I think that a lot of people have decided that I have an attitude. I'm not gregarious with strangers, and due to certain subtle cultural reactions, it can be translated as being cold and arrogant, instead of simply hard to read. I find that it's a useful reaction to, umm, neglect to correct with some people. I'm much more warm with my close friends.

12. What kind of education have you had? My parents were in the military, so I had the standard required education, plus the mounds of books that I've read on various subjects. Aside from that, life itself can be very educational.

13. What are you proudest of? I guess I'd have to say "my career success." I'm finally in a position where I love my work, and they pay me for it. Moreover, if we should lose our beloved Captain, this ship and her crew become mine, to have and to hold. Rasputin has willed it to me. Of course, I have no desire for that to happen, but that's the respect and trust I'm proud to have earned from someone like Rasputin.

14. What is your deepest fear? That I'll actually have to take the Captain's chair of this monster. Just kidding. I'm not afraid of much anymore. I was a little claustrophobic when I was young, but in space you either grow out of it, or you find something else to do for a living. I'm sure there's something I'm terribly fearful of, but I'm not aware of it at the moment.

15. How do you feel about food, and what kinds of food do you prefer? I love food. Unfortunately, I enjoy quality over quantity, which is inverse of what you get with synth food. I try not to bug Cory *too* much! But that's what I go for if we're on a planet somewhere--try out the native food. I like a large variety of foods, though I'm not much for seafood. I do have a soft spot for broccoli.

16. What do you dream about? Oh, mundane stuff, most of the time. I have adventures, frequently, but not much weird stuff happens in my dreams.

17. What makes you angry? How do you react when you're angry? Stupidity. People who make stupid mistakes because they just weren't paying attention. Laziness annoys me on the job. I don't lose control of my anger much anymore, but if you've pissed me off I guarantee that you'll know it, and you'll know why.

18. What do you try hardest to avoid? Dwelling too much on Chance's loss, or saying something untoward to Satin. She's got a lot of triggers.

19. What are you most ashamed of? Let's see... The only thing that I can think of--some of my dealings with "aliens" early on were horribly unschooled, and there were some misunderstandings that made me feel really shallow and stupid. As a result, however, I started studying cultures and it's become a hobby bordering on obsession. I love learning about people. So I guess it works out to have been a positive experience.

20. How religious are you? Religious isn't the right word to describe how I feel. I'm very... Most of the things you describe as religions have doctrines that comes from a book that usually sees from one point of view, and entails the doings of a 'god' or 'gods' that rule over a people. I'm very absorbed in the spiritual aspects of my existence, but it's not a religion. How's that for an answer?

21. How athletic are you? Moderate to active. I engage in martial arts, and I love to play a game that equates to basketball.

22. How methodical are you? Reasonably. I do also dose it heavily with intuition, instinct. I've found that if I try to go on method alone it doesn't work as effectively.

23. What is your usual approach to a problem? I like brainstorming, if at all possible. But if I have to make the decision on my own, I'll go with what feels right, and if that doesn't work, I'll keep trying. I'm a strong supporter of winging it. Sometimes it's the only answer.

24. What are your chief taboos? Dishonesty, primarily. That covers a lot of ground. Malice.

25. Describe a situation where you feel you have behaved courageously. New Queensland Station comes to mind.

26. Do you see yourself as a loving person? Yes, very, with the right people.

27. How artistic are you? GACK! There might be an artistic bone in my body somewhere, but I haven't found it. I'm more of an appreciator of artistic endeavors.

28. How do you feel about money? I enjoy not having to worry about it. I'm very comfortable, now, financially, but in the early days I struggled, and I hated it.

29. How do you feel about material things? I have collections of cultural artifacts, if they can be called that, from all over. Those things are very special to me, but I'm not really taken with "having the most toys."

30. What are your plans for the future? Good question. I haven't really thought about what I plan to do beyond the Tai-Pan. That would depend heavily on what happens in the interim.

31. How idealistic are you? I suppose I have my hopes and ideals, I'm something of a dreamer, but I'm tempered also by that nasty

looking guy that Chester has managed to piss off, who's threatening to come after our peaceful little group with a laser pistol.

32. How realistic are you? Very, most of the time. Can't do this work any other way.

33. How successful are you? I'm doing what I love to do, and I'm comfortable at the same time. I think that qualifies.

34. Name the four things you most often object to in other people. Dishonesty, malice, bigotry, narrow-mindedness.

35. Name the four things you most often object to in yourself. I can be incredibly stubborn at times. And I can be too much of a perfectionist. That I have trouble letting go of my duties once I'm off the bridge, so to speak, at the end of the day. That there are still people that annoy me--I should be able to get past that one by now.

36. How gullible are you? Not terribly. There are some people that I deal with knowing that they're going to try to snow me. And I tend to give people the benefit of the doubt, but that's just because I haven't any way to disprove their stories.

37. How intelligent are you? Another one of these goofy questions you should be asking someone else, like the last one. I like to think that I'm fairly intelligent, thank you, but I have nothing to measure it by... Wait! Let me break out my handy-dandy brain ruler... [mimics pulling a stick ruler out of his back pocket and places it across the top of his head, tipping it for me to see] What's it say?

Says you're a smartass.

There you go! [grins]

38. Do you believe that the end justifies the means? That's a hard one, because the answer that seems ethically correct doesn't necessarily hold up under all circumstances. I can't rationalize "collateral damage", that is innocents and bystanders getting run down in any scheme.

39. How attractive are you physically? Wait! Let me break out my beauty ruler... Sorry. [sigh] Okay. I'm pleased with my appearance; there doesn't seem to be anything about myself that I think needs changing, and I take the best care of my coat that I can. But really, that's a question that can be answered by the "viewer", unless you're looking from the direction of psychoanalysis, eh?

40. Do you believe that there is anything worth dying for? What experiences led you to this conclusion? I would have to say that **lack** of experience colors my answer here. So far in my life I have come across no situation that I thought that martyrdom was an answer to. Perhaps if the fate of the ship and her crew were truly at stake, but I'd like to think that I'd be able to accomplish much more alive than dead.

41. What do you worry about most? If I worry it's more likely to be situational--whether the person sent to accomplish a task is in over

their head, things along that line. I try to be aware of the things I have no control over and accept them as such. Worry usually doesn't help overmuch.

42. How do you feel about violence? Under what circumstances would you kill another sentient being, and how does killing others affect you? What a horrible, morbid question! First of all, I don't condone violence at all. There's nothing glorious and romantic about fighting at any level. I will only kill another sentient being in self defense, and if there's **no other** way out. I'm a staunch supporter of talking, distracting, tricking, and **running**. It makes me ill just to think about the fact that I've had to fire a weapon at another living thing, much less kill something.

43. What makes life worth living for you? The experience of it all. The amazing and wonderful things that we're gifted with all the time.

44. What is the difference between good and evil? I think this is another "eye of the beholder" question. Personally, I like to think of good as being the positive, constructive, healing element, and of evil as being the malicious, destructive, festering element. That's overly simplistic, of course, but we're dealing with philosophy again.

45. What kind of person would you most like to be? I'd like to be... I don't know. I'm pretty content with who I am. I think nearly anything I could say here might be of the "be careful of what you wish for..." category. I'd like to be able to fly, as Isis can fly, but that's not a change in person, just a change in abilities.

46. What do you consider to be worth knowing? Everything you have the opportunity to know.

47. How do you feel about the Tai-Pan, and how she is operated? The Tai-Pan is my life, at this time, hopefully for a long time to come. Things can get a little chaotic now and again, and again, etc., but I get great enjoyment working with this group of people. As to how she is operated, that's something I have some say about, and I do the best I can to see that everyone is treated fairly, and to build some sort of camaraderie.

48. What types of music do you enjoy? Mostly non-electronic--folk type music, "primitive" music, classical Terran, environmental, some types of Terran "rock" music... I keep adding to the list. Nothing really hard or discordant, though.

49. What types of literature/entertainment do you enjoy? I read a lot of non-fiction, and I enjoy mythology from all over. I don't care for holo-films much, or gatherings where there will be huge numbers of people, like at concerts. I prefer more intimate settings to listen to live music in. I enjoy watching cultural dancing, also, especially if I'm familiar with the culture.

50. What person do you think has had the most influence on you and your life? I'd have to say that would be Chance, without question.

Sample Racial Development Questionnaire

Wolverines

by Juli Cowan

Race: Wolverines; "vorine" is the accepted race name.

Origin: the planet Mishikhan. They were developed in tandem with the badger population as an experimental warrior species. It is unknown whether these "experiments" were the work of Carnation TBS or one of the fragmented Earth nations.

Approximate lifespan: Average life span is approximately 72 years. This figure is growing due to scientific exchanges since returning to the galactic community.

Physical features: Vorines are a stocky breed. They average 5'8". They have a black shaggy coat with white markings at the tail,

thighs, and arms. They have 5 fingers and toes, the claws are retractile and are kept very sharp. The limbs are of a human type. Vorine eyes are nearly all black, save for a thin iris of green, yellow, and occasionally red. They have superior night vision, though not as well as badgers.

Vocal range/quality: Vocal ranges are wide, although you will not find many sopranos after adolescence. Speech patterns also vary depending on the area in question. There are 5 distinctly different dialects.

Diet: Vorines are carnivores, although they do eat vegetable matter for variety. They do not tolerate caffeine well, however most have a passion for chocolate since its importation from Tempest. The headaches it often causes are felt well worth the sensuous rewards.

Skill tendencies: Warfare was what the vorines were bred for and they have an instinctual talent for it. Their fur sheds frost easily and does not fill with snow when windy. They are the ideal warrior in an arctic climate.

Socio-sexual info: There are only two genders. Homosexuality is not a taboo, but it is rare after adolescence. Promiscuity and experimentation are encouraged until marriage. Arranged marriages are common and once married a vorine is expected to become monogamous. Since this is a clan custom it is generally followed. Adultery is a serious violation of clan law. Birth control is practiced, and the fate of an unwanted pregnancy is the decision of the clan council. These occur only in remote regions of the planet since most of the population is highly educated.

Basic social groupings: The population is divided into separate clans, which number approximately 260. There are also sub-clans or septs which are under the protection of the main clan branch. They have no seat on the High Council, but they can vote in clan elections. There are hundreds septs.

Kits in the clan are raised in a community home. They attend aptitude training until the age of 9 when they are tested and then sent to various schools to continue in the studies they are best suited for. The testing takes into account the subjects the kit has excelled in, and the needs of his clan. The desires of the kit are unimportant. Depending on the career, most kits enter adult life at the age of 20. A kit is not considered an adult until he can generate an income to the clan. Vorines usually marry by 25.

Basic social philosophy: The basic philosophy of Vorine life is that the clan comes first. It is that simple. The Tanist of the clan has the last word concerning anything. They are the most powerful vorines on the world. The Ardrian although technically head of the High Council does not wield as much actual power as a Tanist. If a Tanist should rebel against the Ardrian's decree, the entire clan would follow the Tanist.

Basic social/racial fondnesses/antipathies: Vorines have an abiding hatred for the badgers who occupy the 3rd planet in the system. This stems from the military take over that occurred 500 years ago, in which much of the Vorine population was slaughtered or enslaved. It was due to the combination of the clan organization and the decay of order on the badger homeworld that the vorines defeated their conquerors and eventually rule Whiskhansyn, a proscribed planet. Vorines have a total monopoly on the Mishikhan solar system. Any space vessel attempting to enter or depart Whiskhansyn without permission from the Mishikhan Defense Armada is subject to destruction.

Vorines also have a racial hatred for humans. Since rejoining the

galactic community, it has been learned that it was the humans who bio-engineered both the vorines and the badgers. They also know the reason for their engineering and blame humans for their meddling. They feel that they were abandoned and that humans were ultimately responsible for the badger incursion afterward.

Vorines love music. They are especially fond of classical and folk music. Because of the volume and high pitch, most cannot tolerate heavy metal, specifically plutonium rock, which has gained popularity in most of the other civilized worlds. Like most other worlds, they have their artists. A unique form of art practiced by vorines is snow sculpture.

There is no organized religion among vorines; however, it has been rumored that a raccoon Catholic missionary has been attempting to convert several clans in the Yankton province. She has also petitioned for admittance to Whiskhansyn to minister to the heathen badgers.

Vorines are proud of their scientific achievements, having relearned them after the abandonment of human kind. They are a high tech society, but do not usually venture outside their star system.

Art Submissions

- 1) Submissions from non-members are welcome; however, all such submissions should deal with the Tai-Pan universe.
- 2) Plagiarism is unacceptable; plagiarists will be severely dealt with.
- 3) Submitting a drawing, portrait, cartoon, or other piece to the Tai-Pan fanzine implies permission to publish the piece unless otherwise stated. Copyright belongs to the original creator. This includes:
 - a) photocopying the submission for purposes of making editorial marks, obtaining character use approval, or archival purposes;
 - b) publishing submissions in the Tai-Pan fanzine, Contributor Newsletter, Sourcebook, or other supplementary publications;
 - c) reprinting previously published issues of the fanzine, Contributor Newsletter, Sourcebook, or supplementary publications as originally published.
- 4) Artwork should be in black upon white paper. The artist's signature should be visible. Owners of any characters appearing in the picture may be acknowledged with a copyright notice.
- 5) Do not send originals. High quality photocopies are fine. Mail submissions flat.
- 6) Artwork may be resized upon publication. The Editor will publish artwork at full size whenever possible; if not possible, the piece will be published as close to full size as is practical.
- 7) The Tai-Pan fanzine aims for a "PG-13" standard. Violence and sex are facts of life, but we ask contributors to treat these topics responsibly. Our choice to use anthropomorphics as vehicles for creative exploration does not mean we are interested in bondage bunnies; "furvert" work should be submitted elsewhere. Occasional supplementary publications may go beyond the "PG-13" realm.
- 8) When working on assigned story illustrations, please send copies of the pencil drawings to the editor before final inking. Artists are also encouraged to show sketches or final drawings to the owner(s) of any copyright characters for comment.
- 9) The Publisher has final say on what drawings and elements are published in the Tai-Pan fanzine.

Story Submissions

- 1) Submissions from non-members are welcome; however, all submissions must deal with the Tai-Pan universe.
- 2) Plagiarism is unacceptable; plagiarists will be severely dealt with.
- 3) Submitting a story, vignette, poem, or other piece to the Tai-Pan fanzine implies permission to publish the piece unless otherwise stated. Copyright belongs to the original creator. This includes:
 - a) photocopying the submission for purposes of making editorial marks, obtaining character use approval, or archival purposes;
 - b) publishing submissions in the Tai-Pan fanzine, Contributor Newsletter, Sourcebook, or other supplementary publications;
 - c) reprinting previously published issues of the fanzine, Contributor Newsletter, Sourcebook, or supplementary publications as originally published.
- 4) Text should be in black upon white paper, typed or computer-printed, double-spaced, with author's name and page numbers appearing clearly on each page.
- 5) Do not send originals or the only copy of a piece.
- 6) All stories will be edited (see *The Editing Process*, below).
- 7) The Tai-Pan fanzine aims for a "PG-13" standard. Violence and sex are facts of life, but we ask contributors to treat these topics responsibly. Our choice to use anthropomorphics as vehicles for creative exploration does not mean we are interested in bondage bunnies; "furvert" work should be submitted elsewhere. Occasional supplementary publications may go beyond the "PG-13" realm.
- 8) Character appearances in stories must be approved by the owner of the character (see *The Editing Process*, below).
- 9) The Publisher has final say on what drawings and elements are published in the Tai-Pan fanzine.

The Editing Process

by Gene Breshears

One of the main activities of the fanzine is the publication of stories. Before you create a story, you should know how editing and story approval works.

Let's begin.

Your goal: I assume that your goals as a writer in this collective are:

a) to create the best stories you can; b) to see your work in print; and c) to receive wild acclaim for your ideas and hours of effort.

My goal: as the editor, my goals are: a) to help you create the best stories you can; b) to ensure that the Tai-Pan fanzine publishes the best anthropomorphic fiction around; and c) to help you receive that wild acclaim which you deserve!

To achieve these ends, every manuscript submitted to the Tai-Pan Project will be edited, *without exception*.

The Process

- 1) First step: you write the story.
- 2) Once you've finished your first draft, send a copy to the Tai-Pan main address for editing. For ease in editing, *please* send your manuscripts double-spaced, typed, and single-sided.

Also, at this point copies of all scenes in which characters other *than your own* perform actions and/or speak dialogue should be sent to those members holding creative control on those characters. *You must get approval of all actions and/or dialogue attributed to characters other than your own!*

If you wrote to another member asking them to approve their characters' appearance(s), and they have failed to respond, *you must notify me*. This communication between writer and other members of the project is extremely important, so I'll try to get a response for you.

3) The editing process begins as soon as we receive your story! The process for that is as follows:

◆ **Draft One:** original draft, send to Tai-Pan for initial edit. I'll assign an editor to go over the story. The story may be edited by me or any of the Associate Editors. Edits will be made in colored ink upon your manuscript, then returned to you for a rewrite. Copies of both the manuscript and editing notes will be made for our records.

◆ **Draft Two:** first rewrite. Send back to the main Tai-Pan address. The story will be assigned again. If possible, the same person who edited your first draft will be assigned. Edits will be made in colored ink on the manuscript again, and returned to you.

◆ **Draft Three:** second rewrite. Same as above. And so on for as many rewrites as necessary until the story is accepted.

◆ **Final Draft:** The story may be judged to be the final draft as early as draft one, but an average of two to three rewrites are normally requested. The final edit will always be made by me, as I have the responsibility to approve everything before going into the fanzine.

4) Once a draft has been deemed a final draft, it's time for you to sit back and rest -- or better yet, start that next story!

Once your story has been finalized, I assign an artist to illustrate your work. You are welcome to give me a list of the three artists who you'd most like to see illustrate your work, but due to a number of factors, we cannot make any promises as to who will be given the final assignment.

Once illustrations are completed, your story will be printed in the next available issue! Bravo!

The Problems

Let's face it. Few of us really likes to have their work critiqued. What every writer wants to hear is: "Wow! This is an incredible story! We'll run it exactly as is--and hey! Let's submit it for the Hugo! It's sure to win!" What we hear instead is, well... not always so ego boosting.

Points to remember when receiving an edit:

- ✓ We are working with you, not against you. We want to see you create the best work you can, and we'll push you pretty hard at times if we think you're ignoring your own talent.
- ✓ No critique is a personal attack. If we've hurt your feelings somehow, let us know it! Demand an apology, and let's try to work the miscommunication out.
- ✓ Our reactions to your story are going to be the same reactions you will earn from your audience. There are *always* exceptions to this rule, but if you have pleased us, you've pleased 98% to 99.99% of your readers.

As editors, each member of the editorial board has the responsibility

to tell you the truth, which you don't always get from your parents/friends/spouse when you ask them to read something and tell you what they think. If you believe that we don't like something about your work because we simply fail to be an appreciative enough audience, chances are your ego is getting in your way.

✓ You are free to discuss any critiques with the editor. If you think a critique is wrong, say so! Remember, you can negotiate and/or request a second opinion at any time in the editing process. However, it is *my* decision whether a story is ready to publish; it is not put up for a vote. Don't let that scare you off, I'm here to work *with* you. Here's a trick to try when you strongly disagree with a critique:

✗ Write a letter to the editor explaining why you disagree, but do *not* send it.

✗ Set the letter aside for a few days. Take out the story and your letter and look at them together. Is all the information in your explanation also in the story? Are the character motivations explained in your letter clear to the reader of the story?

✗ If not, rewrite the story, adding the missing information.

✗ Send the rewrite back in for another round of edits.

Common Problems

✓ **Inappropriate use of characters.** We all do it from time to time. Be certain to get full approval of everything that will see print.

✓ **Lack of obvious consequence to actions.** Again, we all do this from time to time. Some things are obvious (such as sabotaging the ship will get you keelhauled without a vac suit), some less so (dolphins breath through their blow hole, not their mouth; if you tie a gag around Kiakaru's mouth, he can still make plenty of noise). We're here to help keep continuity, so we'll gently let you know about any boobos.

✓ **Logic jumps.** Writers often get so wrapped up in the minor details of a plot that they forget that point B lies between points A and C. Again--catching these obvious logic holes is how we're supposed to earn our keep.

✓ **Plot difficulties.** Sometimes, something is missing, and that something may spell the difference between a string of pointless scenes and a story.

Recommendations

✓ **Leave out gratuitous sex and violence.** We're all adults here, so what's the need for taboos? Well, first of all, not all of our readers are legal adults. Even our more mature readers don't necessarily expect or want to open the pages to something "X" rated when they get their fanzine through the mail. Sex and violence happen in life, so of course they can happen in stories. However, sex and violence

do not make a story unto themselves. They might be elements in a plot, but they should only be used to advance the plot.

✓ **Avoid flashbacks whenever possible.** In our experience, flashbacks are badly overused in fiction--both amateur and professional.

✓ **Avoid making any character (your own included) a superhero.** Remember—we are not here to prove that our characters are superior to someone else's.

✓ **Avoid making any character (your own included) a "super victim."** It is tempting sometimes to create a character who is the victim of countless tragedies in order to evoke compassion. Instead you create a character who is pitiable, rather than sympathetically. Avoid the "woe is me" stereotype.

✓ **Remember your character development!**

✓ **Remember your "hook"!** The hook is how you grab the reader's attention and beguile him or her to keep reading. The hook doesn't have to startle or shock the reader; it does not have to be action. What you want to do with the opening of the story is tantalize the reader—catch the reader's interest. Remember, you won't be there when he or she opens the story to say, "Keep reading! There's a really good part coming up."

✓ **Remember to set your mood!**

✓ **Remember to build your setting!**

✓ **Remember to have a plot!** A plot is not merely a string of events. Slice of life seldom makes scintillating fiction. Plot is a conflict or problem which confronts the protagonist and is resolved by the protagonist's own actions. There must be obstacles to overcome, and the reader needs to believe there's a possibility that the protagonist will fail. Otherwise, it's no fun to read.

✓ **80% or more of your character's current life is being spent aboard his/her ship.** Exotic settings aren't required for a good story--we'd like at least 50% of our stories to occur "at sea" if at all possible. Intra character conflicts make for fabulous stories, so explore them!

Finally, I'd like to recommend some of my favorite books on the craft of writing:

The Elements of Style, by Strunk & White

The Transitive Vampire, by Karen Elizabeth Gordon

The Well-Tempered Sentence, by Karen Elizabeth Gordon

The Art of Fiction, by John Gardner

Writing Science Fiction and Fantasy edited by Gardner Dozois, Tina Lee, Stanley Schmidt, Ian Randall Strock, and Sheila Williams.

The Writer's Handbook (any edition), published by The Writer, Inc.