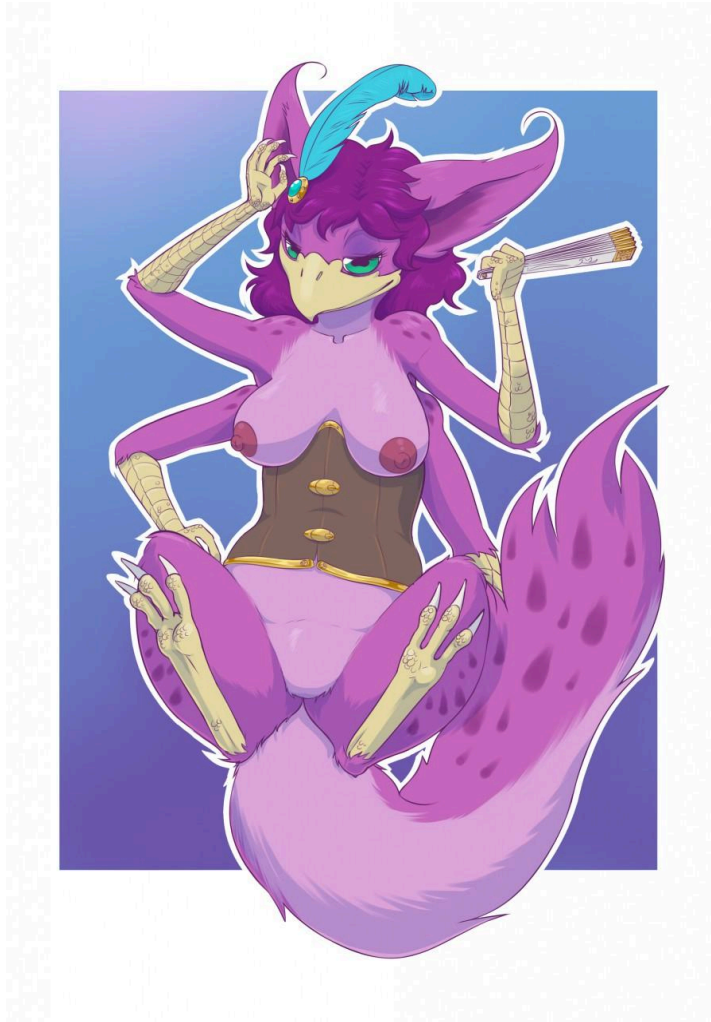


Toves:

Diminutive, Asexual Merchants



art by Comfycushion

Name: Tove

Genders: Male and Female

Height: 2'10" – 3'5" Toves are fairly short compared to other races, and often switch to "all fours" (really six) when the occasion calls for speed. In this position, they are rarely higher than 1'5".

Weight: 30-70 lbs Toves are generally short and stocky, with broad, thick tails

Average Lifespan: 170-220 years

Fur/Scales/Feathers:

Toves are covered in a thick covering of downy, fine feathers. These can range from deep maroon-purple, to yellow-ochre, or even greens and blues. (Think tropical birds) In terms of head covering, females have longer plumage, which males often sport crests. Currently, those toves that deal with humanoid races often opt to style their plumage to mimic mammalian head-hair. Their hands and feet are featherless and scaled, looking like pale yellow or orange bird talons. Their beaks often match their talons, though many toves color their beaks with gaudy stripes or patterns.

Eyes (if any):

Toves possess four eyes, set just above their beaks, (two on each side, arranged laterally.) Their eyes are not large, relative to their faces, and have sideways, goat-like pupils. Colors range across the yellow spectrum (green, orange, yellow). Toves can move their eyes independently, though the effect is often disconcerting for other sapients.

Wings (if any): None.

Features (Describe body and facial structure in detail):

Limbs: Toves look more like stuffed animals than other humanoids. They possess six limbs in total, each typically covered in thick, lush feathers until the first joint, switching into scaly, bird-like talons. Each dextrous talon possesses 3 claws and an opposable thumb. In their natural, aquatic habitat, this allows toves to manipulate a multitude of devices at once, and most tove terminals are engineered with this aesthetic in mind.

On land, they typically stand on their hind legs, supported by thick haunches, their bellies and tails dragging along the ground.

Faces: The majority of a tove face is dominated by a broad, short beak, ending in a ridged hook. Beak colors are generally a pale yellow or orange, matching the tone of their scaly limbs. Though hard and chitinous at the tip, their beaks become more flexible at their edges, allowing for a wide variety of facial expressions.

When communicating with others of their species, toves often accompany spoke work with the movement of their long, rabbit-like ears. This is often cause for concern when a non-tove speaks with two or more toves at once, as toves can carry on basic conversations among their species with ear movement alone. (An underwater adaptation.)

Bodyshape: Toves are distinctly non-human in proportion. Their amphibious lifestyle and unusual number of limbs mean that they often lack visible hips or chests, resembling more animalistic, tubular torsos. Oftentimes toves will adopt fashion items, such as corsets or vests to mildly compress their bodies to create the illusion of hips or chests. Some toves, particularly ones of high status, often harem owners adjusting for dealing with other sapient races, utilize mild genetic manipulation to develop visible breasts. These breasts serve no real purpose or stimulation for the toves, but simply function as an aid for dealing with sex-driven sapient species.

Tails: Toves possess broad, muscular tails. Underwater, these tails are their primary mode of propulsion. When a tove is preparing to spend extended time out of water, they will often bloat their tails, absorbing as much water as possible to sustain them on dry land. These tails also house a tove's reproductive organs.

Fashion: Toves dress in clothing vaguely evocative of Victorian Earth, accessorized with coppery gear motifs and devices, focusing primarily on vests, ties, and shirts (for males) or corsets, heavy dresses, and loose blouses for females. Due to the nature of tove anatomy, pants are impractical, and, given the thickness of their feathers, unnecessary. Toves as a race possess a fondness for hats, and many wear period-appropriate top hats or bowlers. Despite their primitive look, most tove accessories are outfitted with a fair level of technological sophistication. (For example, many pocketwatches and fans contain holo screens.)

Enviorns Typically Inhabited: Because of the race's mercantile predilections, the majority of toves dwell in Wabeships, dome-shaped satellites containing what appear to be small cities surrounding well-manicured lawns and clear ponds. Upon entry, though,

a visitor finds that the majority of the buildings within the domes are not residencies but commercial businesses, making Wabeships effectively floating shopping malls, designed to entice and attract potential customers. The center of these cities is often a large bordello of non-tove species, overseen by the captain of the ship. The toves themselves generally dwell in the sections of the ship below the dome in water-filled corridors and chambers. Due to the high level of water pressure utilized by toves, and the three-dimensional layout of corridors, rooms, and terminals, the sub-sections of a Wabeship are generally inaccessible to other races. Smaller tove ships, not designed to cater to other races are likewise filled with water and designed to tove sensibilities.

The only reason a tove can be found outside of a Wabeship or off its home planet is the possibility of money. Toves are not explorers, thrill-seekers, or scientists, but WILL seek out any opportunity to turn a profit. Thus, Toves can be found on any planet hosting a decent number of credit-carrying individuals. They are generally not far from a small stand or pressurized chamber to provide them with the comforts of home.

Reproduction:

Though toves resemble avian or mammalian creatures in appearance and behavior, their nearest terran reproductive equivalents are plants. Their bizarre reproductive systems and lack of sexually-derived pleasure mean that they are not sexually or reproductively compatible with other species.

Reproduction between a male and female tove usually follows the following process and requires cool, clean areas of water with no less than 40 Psi of pressure:

- 1.) Females open 50-200 gonopores lining their tails, releasing spores into the water
- 2.) Males open their gonopores and extend out 20-100 hair-like stamens from their tails, each a filament topped with an adhesive cluster of the male's genetic material
- 3.) Male stamens sweep through the water, attempting to catch female spores.
- 4.) Cell division begins immediately on contact between female spores and male stamens, forming gametes.
- 5.) The male brings his tail into contact with the female's, as each gamete-topped stamen gravitates towards a female's gonopore and lodges in there, breaking free of the male's body.
- 6.) Tail-to-tail contact is repeated for maximum implantation of gametes into the female tail.

- 7.) Each gonopore that received a gamete immediately seals itself, and begins to develop a jelly-like sack around the gamete as it develops into an embryo.

The mating process may take upwards of several hours, and results in no sexual pleasure for either tove. Gestation of the eggs can take up to 6 months. Over the course of this period, the female tove's tail swells, often to the size of the rest of her body. As a result, female toves are often water-bound and find landbound mobility too difficult. A female tove's body often reabsorbs some embryos, breaking them down until she is left with no more than 1-3 eggs. A female lays her clutch of jelly-like eggs underwater, where they must remain undisturbed for several weeks. Toves most often prefer the aid of technology to make sure their eggs are kept safe and secure.

Toves reproduce out of a reasoned desire to continue populating their race and to produce a workforce. While parents are responsible for the initial payment of expenses incurred when raising a child, every newly-born tove is born in debt, as parents track all costs as the child matures. Upon reaching the age of 20, a tove is considered an adult, and must begin the process of repaying the cost of its upbringing. At this time, their debt begins to accrue interest at government-regulated rates. Typically, most toves take 10 years or so to repay their debt, which is split between both parents.

Tove broods generally range in size from 1 to 3. However, adult toves find it economically unsound to raise more than 2 children at a time. Remaining children are given to the community, and raised by governmental bureaus. While such children grow up with bureaucratic systems in place of parents, their apprenticeships mean that they are not required to pay back any parental debt.

History:

Mome, the tove homeworld, is a planet of vast, shallow seas, similar to Earth during the Cambrian era. Most of the land is covered with a single species of foot-high terrestrial algae, and the widest variety of life is aquatic. Oddly, evolutionary paths on Mome ignored the relatively sparse landmasses, and diverged based on aerial lifeforms and aquatic ones. The skies of Mome are filled with vast clouds of floating invertebrates, aerial jellyfish the size of blimps, and predatory fish that adapted to life in the skies. Predation from said fish at various points in their evolution forced the toves into deeper and deeper water, building vast civilizations in the depths.

There, tove civilization advanced, and as they developed technology, they ventured back to the surface, building spires and eventually venturing into space. Upon contacting the greater universe, toves found themselves at a unique disadvantage. The galaxy seemed to run on sex, a language in which they lacked fluency.

Though the toves didn't understand the obsession with sex, they could wrap their heads around it as a commodity--a virtually inexhaustible resource that other species couldn't seem to get enough of. Through the use of contracts, salaried employees, and a unified trade and communication network, toves began serving as middlemen for sexual encounters between species. Eventually, these arrangements evolved into large-scale harems, controlled by wealthy Procurers and Madams.

The tove race as a whole is governed by the Gyre Grand Camarilla, often referred to as "The Camarilla." Officially a megacorporation, it creates laws, enforces laws, and regulates policies between toves. The Camarilla encourages the participation of individuals by means of buyable votes. Camarilla policy is decided by the majority of votes, and votes are purchasable from the Camarilla. Smaller policy changes usually result in cheaper costs for votes, while major decisions often cost millions of credits per vote. For a tove to effect change in his/her government, he/she must first accumulate a sizable fortune.

A heavy focus on wealth, frugality, and business savvy shapes tove society. Wealth is status, and a lust for economic gain is the closest thing toves experience to libido. Toves often become disturbingly focused and intense at the prospect of monetary gains, and judge the "attractiveness" of a person (suitability as a mate/spouse) based on their personal wealth. It is unusual but not unheard of for a tove to marry a member of another species based solely on monetary gain.

As a result, toves are often approached with caution by other races. They are not generally considered deceptive, but they are hard bargainers, and do not tire of negotiations. Because the Camarilla enforces accountability for PR purposes, rare is the tove that will actually "cheat" a customer with damaged or misleading goods.

Other Notes:

-Though not particularly "sexy" toves are intended to serve as encounterable merchants in T.i.T.S., and players may encounter a wabeship en route to a new planet, and be

welcomed in for a shopping trip, or simply run into up-and-coming toves trying to make a profit on various planets.

-Other potential encounters with the toves might involve firing upon a particularly obstinate tove ship, then upon letting it escape, receiving a bill for damages.