

Crime and Punishment

An evocative one-page milieu for sci-fi storytelling

2011 © PJ Cunningham
This page and more online at ironregime.com,
released under Creative Commons License
Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0
creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0

Troubled dreams haunt the desperate populace of a backwater world, while deep beneath a dark ocean lies an ancient secret, unknown and unknowable... but not undisturbed.

TELL A STORY of madness and mystery using elements on this page. Expand as desired or [go online for more info](#).

Color code: Places People Things

DOSTOEVSKY

is an insignificant world somewhat smaller than Earth, lies in the Dpres subsector beyond the fringe of Imperial space.

- Near-normal gravity (0.9 G).
- Surface is 79% water.
- Extensive ice caps. Four glacier-dominated continents.
- Year-round cold (avg -15° C) and O₂-rich atmosphere force inhabitants to wear protective gear and filter masks outside of enviro-regulated enclosures.
- Two million miserable residents.
- Three bickering governments: Yazand, Kizakhstan, and Ir'ab.



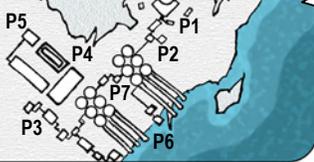
THE WAN SEA is a forbidding expanse of murky water that forms the northwestern arm of the planet's largest ocean.

- Aquaculture pads ("lilypads" to locals) are big floating sea-farms.
- Most surface transport is by ship.
- Knowledgeable sailors turn on their low-rad emitter to deter predators.

LOCATIONS IN THE WAN SEA

- W1. Ox Rift, 18km-long curtain of O₂ bubbles rising from sea floor
- W2. Pad 17, "best bio-weed around"
- W3. Grey Void, a nutrient-poor zone
- W4. Glacier Reach, perilous ice floe
- W5. The Mazre Snake, surprisingly strong north-south current
- W6. Akyon Abyss of unknown depth

PTERAGREB



PTERAGREB (N32° W0°) is a jumbled cluster of ugly reprocessed-stone buildings on the muddy coast of the Wan Sea.

- Capital of the Oligarchy of Yazand
- Hub of agricultural trade from nearby tundra farms and aquaculture pads.
- In their insurmountable poverty, residents turn to morose proclivities and sordid diversions, unaware their disaffection is magnified by the nearby Crystalline Vortex.

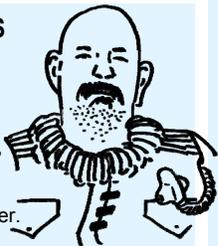
LOCATIONS IN PTERAGREB

- P1. DOS/D, a well-equipped starport (pronounced "dosed" by locals).
- P2. Ptera Uni, a private college, medicenter and museum. Staff is competent but insular. Library data link available.
- P3. Wintermire, tenement housing.
- P4. Castel Square, where vendors jostle for space among the bland government edifices.
- P5. Arena, a site for violent sport.
- P6. Docks, built on a thick blue ice shelf. Warehouses, ships, and a private pen for Station subs.
- P7. Refineries make air and water.

PERSONALITIES

suitable for use as PCs or NPCs:

1. Ralvonse, black market fence.
2. Ward Vamendar, police inspector.
3. Alion, newly-arrived researcher.
4. Jhamyrk, aquaculture pad farmer.
5. Yuldor, alien pilgrim to Ancient sites.
6. Kulana, Imperial surveyor.



OSKAR is a nervous young research student plagued by guilt.

Possibilities:

1. Believes his faulty research caused the death of Ivvdris' husband, Zane.
2. Murdered an archeologist named Taavo and stole the Helical Torus.
3. Believes his research is being used for criminal purposes by Ivvdris, and wants to stop her.
4. As above, but is helping her.
5. As above, but is blackmailing her.
6. Actually a member of a pseudo-religious cult with an anti-psionic agenda, planning to destroy the Station and Crystalline Vortex.



ROI is a thin, disgruntled ex-guard from the Station who claims he discovered illegal activity there.

Possibilities:

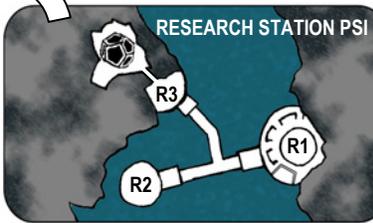
1. Fears for his life; Ivvdris has killers looking for him.
2. Roi is blackmailing Ivvdris.
3. His claim is false; he simply wants revenge for being fired.
4. Obsessed with his brief glimpse of the Crystalline Vortex; will do anything to approach it again.
5. Actually an Imperial agent with an anti-psi agenda, gathering evidence to shut down the Station.
6. Actually a mind-spy for a distant psionically oppressive empire interested in duplicating or harnessing the effects of the Crystalline Vortex.



RESEARCH STATION

PSI is a small Imperial facility 30km west of Pteragreb, 4km below the surface on the floor of the Wan Sea.

- Station moved here from Gabriel, a barren planet 2 parsecs away, when unorthodox genetic experiments there went awry (original designation was Delta).
- 2-hour sub trip from Pteragreb.
- 3 pressurized geodesic domes: habitat and labs (R1), fusion power plant (R2), and study site (R3). Vehicle bay access is in R1.
- Chief scientist, 2 assoc scientists, 4 security personnel, 4 support staff, 10 student researchers
- Dome R3 conceals the station's *raison d'être*: the Crystalline Vortex, a site from the time of the Ancients. Access to R3 is restricted to those with a subdermal Xenon implant.



IVVDRIS is the sensual and depraved chief scientist who thinks her dead husband, Zane, is haunting her.

Possibilities:

1. Zane, also a scientist, went mad and threw himself into the Vortex.
2. Ivvdris killed Zane out of jealousy; his 'ghost' is her manifest guilt.
3. Ivvdris was never married; she's faking insanity to get reassigned (or for a more devious reason).
4. Zane faked his death and is staging the 'hauntings' to drive Ivvdris mad.
5. Zane's ghost is real; he seeks vengeance for his death.
6. Zane's ghost is real; he is trying to tell Ivvdris something important.



THE HELICAL TORUS

is a twisted pair of 5mm-thick strands of matte black material held apart from each other by an unknown force, forming a 10cm-diameter ring.

- Looks like jet, but much stronger
- Electrically conductive
- Possessor's psionic powers (if any) are amplified, and knows when psionic abilities are used nearby, but is subjected to the unbridled effects of the Crystalline Vortex at all times.
- Based on size and shape, expect players to call it "the magic donut"



THE CRYSTALLINE VORTEX is an upside-down funnel of anti-matter swirling at the centre of a 30m-diameter jet-black dodecahedron embedded in the sea floor.

- Same material as the Helical Torus
- Each facet has a 12m-wide aperture ("gateways" in current research files) allowing entry.
- Those attempting to pass the gateways are tested by momentary visions of a very personal and difficult nature.
- Once inside, the vortex is accessible, but the Helical Torus is required to pierce it.

AT THE HEART OF THE TEMPEST

lies an ancient secret. Possibilities:

1. A tranquil zone of psionic empowerment.
2. A device of the Ancients, still operating after eons, can be stabilized through psionic contact to focus or eliminate its effects.
3. As above, but the device stores negative psionic energy; it is nearly full and will rupture soon, with disastrous consequences.
4. A pocket universe populated by beings feeding on the psyches of the populace of Dostoevsky.
5. A sleeping member of the Ancient race, its fragmentary consciousness affecting all sentient beings in the solar system. When awakened, it is benevolent but aloof, as a venerable sage to young children.
6. As above, but the being was imprisoned here, and exacts a terrible revenge on those nearby when released.

THERE IS NO REST FOR THE

WICKED on Dostoevsky, for unbeknownst to all, the incessant psionic emanations of the Crystalline Vortex churns emotions, induces nightmares, and gives slow birth to madness. Here are 6 odd effects to experience:

1. sees movement beneath others' flesh
2. dreams vividly of violent acts
3. no longer finds joy in anything
4. desires warmth above all else, even risking burns or hyperthermia
5. always questions others' motives
6. made irritable by a ceaseless, incurable migraine

MISSIONS ON DOSTOEVSKY

in case your PCs need some direction:

1. Recover the Helical Torus.
2. Solve the murder of a noted archeologist named Taavo.
3. Investigate allegations of criminal activity at the Research Station.
4. Discover the secret of the Crystalline Vortex.
5. Find and stop the mind-spy.
6. Protect the Research Station from an impending terrorist attack.