

Notes on using GrimJack's city of Cynosure as a game setting.

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Introduction

Welcome to Cynosure, the pan-dimensional city at the center of all reality.

In this packet you'll find quick overviews of the city, its history, a few of the major forces in Cynosure, a sampling of places, equipment, lingo, and races, and an example character questionnaire. The information is by no means comprehensive, just a little taste of things. Hope you enjoy reading, hope you enjoy Cynosure, and most of all I hope you have a great time with your campaign!

(For the most part this information is canonical from the comic series – only in a few rare cases did I find it necessary to add to the source material).

This document may be found online at: <http://www.themook.net/rpg/cyn/>

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CYNOSURE

Cynosure: 1: a center of attraction or attention 2: the pan-dimensional city at the center of the multiverse

Nature of the City

"Some called it Nirvana. Some called it Hell. The city's real name is Cynosure. Sweet, cynical Cynosure, built where the multiverse meets. Cross the street and sometimes you've crossed a dimension! The laws of physics change from block to block. Magic works here, science over there."

- *GrimJack*, mercenary

Cynosure is a gigantic city, a patchwork of constantly shifting dimensions "floating like a bubble in the pan-dimensional vortex". It occupies the space at the very center of all dimensions, of all realities...sooner or later, all dimensions touch Cynosure (though they might not stay long). The city itself is ringed by the Outlands, a harsh and blighted desert; the Outlands, in turn, are bounded by the vortex walls, impenetrable transparent barriers that protect everything inside from the ravages of the vortex. Nothing, neither magical nor technological, has *ever* been able to so much as scratch these walls.

The dimensions in phase with Cynosure at any given time represent a dizzying array of different races and environments; nearly anything is possible, somewhere, within the city limits. Though a few smaller dimensions exist totally within the city, most areas are only tiny pieces, allowing access to their home dimension from the city proper.

Distances in space appear to be irrelevant to the workings of Cynosure. Earth and a planet orbiting Alpha Centauri could both be in phase simultaneously, representing the same dimension but vastly different points in space.

There are a few kinds of different dimensions present in Cynosure:

Permanent

The central area of Cynosure is clustered around the so-called "permanent" dimensions, the dozen or so dimensions which have remained in phase with the city for centuries. Though nothing in Cynosure is truly permanent, these areas show no signs of phasing out any time soon. Permanent dimensions house many of the city government buildings, and are also highly sought after as locales for commercial ventures.

Regular

Regular dimensions are numerous in the city, and comprise the largest overall percentage. These areas phase in and out with Cynosure on some kind of regular timetable, though the frequency varies widely. Some stay for decades before leaving for a few months; others phase in for only a couple of hours every twenty years.

Irregular

These are chaotic dimensions that apparently phase in and out with Cynosure randomly. They are dangerous places to be, regardless of their actual environment, since they may abruptly phase out at any time, stranding visitors away from the city for long periods of time.

Doorway

Doorway dimensions may be permanent, regular, or irregular with respect to their phasing frequency, but they all share a common size. In one sense, all dimensions in phase with Cynosure are "doorway dimensions," in that they allow access from the city to a distant dimension. But most dimensions which phase into synch with Cynosure are at least a few blocks wide- actual doorway dimensions are much smaller than that, usually just physical portals to other dimensions. The door which led to your closet yesterday could lead to a dimension where you don't exist today, so many residents of Cynosure have grown understandably cautious when using doorways.

Snowball

Snowball dimensions are "ambient rolling spheres that look like big snowballs outside, but are quasi-dimensions inside". Though fairly rare, these troublesome anomalies do occasionally manifest, plucking beings right off the street and transporting them to other realities.

Artificial

Though the technology does exist to create artificial dimensions, the enormous expense is usually prohibitive. The only artificial dimension currently in phase with Cynosure is the huge floating sphere of the city's University.

Residents of Cynosure tend to be very difficult to surprise, for obvious reason; they often feel they've "seen it all." Newcomers to the city are usually overwhelmed by the sheer size and variety of it all. The government, theoretically, posts warning and information signs (for example, "Warning, Non-Techno Zone 1500 Meters Ahead") at all major dimensional shifting points, but Cynosure is too vast, and the bureaucracy too bloated, to rely on such efforts.

History of the City

Many believe Cynosure to be eternal - certainly no sentient has ever claimed to remember a time when Cynosure was not. Eternal or not, no one knows the city's exact origin. Some say it was built eons ago as a feeding ground for demons, others that an ancient race of scientists constructed it as a zoo, still others that it sprang fully formed from the tear of a god. No one knows for certain, and perhaps no one ever will- after countless searches by countless races, no clues to Cynosure's past have ever surfaced.

The history of Cynosure has always been a violent and bloody one, brief stretches of peace punctuated by brutal wars and cataclysms. Commerce has always been its lifeblood; it is, after all, common ground for hundreds of dimensions and races.

Unfortunately, commerce often leads to violence in Cynosure. At best this violence is intercorporate espionage and sabotage; at worst it can lead to a Trade War, an unchecked and invariably devastating free-for-all between the most powerful conglomerates.

The last Trade War was almost fifty years ago and ended only after most of the city was destroyed. Despite the best precautions of the city government and the hollow promises of corporate PR staff, the threat of a new Trade War is never far from the citizens' minds.

Trade Wars, however, are not the only threat to the city. Twenty-five years ago a young fighter named Dancer led a gladiator's rebellion against the city government. He was the greatest gladiator ever, enormously charismatic and popular, and his coup came very close to succeeding. But in the end his revolt, like all others, was put down. Dancer and all of his lieutenants were "killed during apprehension," bloodsports were made illegal to prevent future uprisings, and the city went on.

The most recent major threat the city faced was perhaps the worst ever- Cynosure came to the brink of annihilation. Twenty years ago an artificial intelligence was created in a corporate lab and programmed to work magic. It was not the first fusing of magic and technology, but it was by far the most powerful. A demon possessed the AI and used its strength to rip open a doorway between its home dimension and Cynosure. Within days the entire city was choked with demons of every shape and size, intent not on conquest or plunder but on blood and torture. The Demon Wars raged for months. The demons were eventually pushed back to their own dimension (dubbed, naturally, "Hell"), but only after the city was razed and almost one billion beings lay dead.

After that, the city did what it does best - rebuilt itself. Demon worship was outlawed, and strict regulations were put in place governing the use of technomagic.

At present, Cynosure is relatively calm. No demons have been seen in the city for almost a decade; the Arena remains closed, though small pockets of illegal bloodsports certainly exist; and the Council of Ministers has kept close watch on the megacorps, guarding against any overt warfare. The city is at peace, though it is a tense peace, requiring constant vigilance.

Life in the City

Government

"The city itself is too damned big to be really ruled. The dimensions govern themselves, while the citywide matters are tended to by an oligarchy called the Council of Ministers. Nobody voted them in, and nobody's gonna vote them out either. So what goes up for grabs at election time? The bureaucracy."

- *GrimJack*

As noted above, Cynosure is far too large to be truly ruled. Each dimension governs and maintains itself, leading to wide discrepancies in the quality of such things as law enforcement and medical treatment. Some dimensions post armed guards at their

borders, to protect themselves from the “wrong element”; others are nothing more than violent maelstroms of brutality, with no laws enforced except “the strong shall survive”. Most fall somewhere in-between. Almost universally, systems of justice in Cynosure are harsh; with so many sentients and so much violence, few are allowed a second chance.

There is an overall citywide government, at the top of which is the Council of Ministers. The Council is “an oligarchy of the wealthiest and most powerful beings in the city,” and does wield considerable power. The Council has prevented Trade War for years by vowing to ally themselves with any corporation that falls under attack, a tactic that has kept the peace in Cynosure since the Demon Wars. Perhaps the most powerful of the 20 Council Ministers is William Honesworth, the Finance Minister. He oversees and decides which corporation the city will buy which commodities from. Honesworth has a reputation as a fair and honest man, and every day he walks a razor’s edge to avoid being perceived as favoring any one corporation over any other.

Below the Council of Ministers is the Bureaucracy, the bloated and largely ineffective collection of petty politicians who run the city’s day-to-day affairs. Corruption is common at this level of the government, but as long as certain criteria are always met the Council generally leaves the politicians to their own devices. There are no set terms of office - whenever the city’s coffers begin running low, the Council will decree that an election is to take place. Corporations will then spend huge amounts of creds to back their favorite politicians’ campaigns, in exchange for preferential treatment after the election. Citizens vote by making donations to the account of the candidate they wish to vote for; the winner of a particular office is the candidate who receives the most donations by election day. The city government then takes control of all the creds donated. Offices of the Bureaucracy aren’t particularly powerful (Secretary of Street Maintenance, Officer of Waste Management), but they can be used to amass a great amount of wealth in a short time.

Laws

Laws in Cynosure are designed to protect the interests of the city itself, not its citizenry. Murder is illegal not because it harms an individual, but because unchecked violence is bad for business. The bulk of the city's legal code is concerned with corporate and contractual law; violations of these laws also carry the stiffest penalties. Cynosure enforces its laws not only on all dimensions currently in phase, but also on the timelines. Time travel is extremely difficult and unpredictable, but it can be done, so Cynosure mandates that all time travel be cleared and registered through Temporal Control.

In practice, the extent to which the law will protect someone depends on their wealth and status. A robbery against an office worker of some huge megacorp might be investigated; the murder of a few street laborers won't.

A few crimes *always* attract immediate attention, no matter where they occur. Demon worship has been outlawed since the Demon Wars, under penalty of immediate execution, and is not tolerated for any practitioner, no matter who they are. Bloodsports are illegal as well, though there are certainly small, exclusive arenas for the rich and powerful. As long as these sports remain discrete, and the appropriate bribes are tended to, the government generally looks the other way. Finally, anyone researching ways to affect either the vortex walls or the mechanics of dimensional phasing faces execution.

Travel

There are a couple of ways to reach the more remote dimensions of the city. The Eternity Road is a "paved dimensional portal" which allows easy access to hundreds of dimensions. The Office of Road Control and Repair is charged with maintaining an up-to-date listing of all dimensions currently in phase with the Road, and with posting this information to the appropriate Spatio-Temporal Ramp sign. Dimensions come and go with amazing frequency, however, and you may not always end up where you wanted to go.

Similarly, the Eternity Rail, housed in the mammoth Cynosure Grand Terminal, is "a sometimes dangerous proposition. You can't always be sure that your station will still be in phase with Cynosure by the time you get there."

Miscellaneous

A wide variety of currencies find their way to Cynosure, and money changing is a huge industry. Cynosure mints its own currency as well, and this is considered the standard for all transactions (individuals are, of course, free to negotiate payments and contracts in any currency they wish). The smallest unit of city cred is the decicred, a tiny silver coin; other common coins are the cred, the fivecred, the tencred, etc...all of these coins are made of a silver and iron alloy.

The *CynTimes* is the only newspaper distributed throughout the entire city. Some see it as merely a government propaganda machine, others as the last bastion of the free press- it's probably a little of both.

Finally, common sights on the streets of Cynosure are tourbots, small robots that allow their users to tour the city without ever leaving the safety of a booth. "Tourbots go everywhere you can, and some places you can't. See, hear, feel, taste and smell through their sensors- with a built in 95 mm camera besides." The average price for renting a tourbot is 500 creds/day, making it mostly a pastime for the well-off. Many places, especially in the rougher sections of town, don't allow tourbots, and will shoot them on sight.

Forces in the City

Council of Ministers

The 20 Ministers of the Cynosure Council have an incredible amount of power at their disposal, but they are wise enough to use it only sparingly. The Council oversees the development of the city, but they generally don't interfere until a situation begins to have citywide ramifications.

Alpha Cetaurii Commercial Empire (ACCE)

This multidimensional conglomerate is the largest in Cynosure, dealing in everything from orbital platforms to personal hygiene items. The ACCE does not specialize in any one field, preferring instead to offer any and every product that might

find a market in the city. The current head of the ACCE is Emperor and Chairman of the Board Gaius Winthrop Cser IV, a large gold skinned humanoid who first took control from his father 35 years ago. His son, C'Janus Cser V, will one day do the same.

Xygan Corporation, Interstellar (XCI)

A close rival of the ACCE, XCI deals primarily in high technology items, though they also maintain a vast line of other goods. The current CEO is Hal Xygan¹⁰, a slightly reptilian humanoid genetically bred to be identical to his predecessor, Hal Xygan⁹. Hal Xygan has ruled over XCI, in one form or another, for the past 300 years.

The Lord Protector of Cynosure

Cynosure's Lord Protector is an old, semi-religious function that was revived a few years ago. A being named Phaeton laid claim to the title and, despite the fact that neither the corporations nor the government acknowledge his authority, began proclaiming that he was the incarnation of Cynosure itself, and that he would weed out all threats to the city and its people. Though Phaeton does boast some powerful abilities (including the ability to warp realities within his immediate area), he keeps largely to himself, only occasionally appearing to deliver some great speech or to remind the populace they are still under "his watchful care."

Transdimensional Police (TDP)

The TDP is the government's law enforcement arm, and they claim jurisdiction in any dimension currently in phase with the city. Though TDP headquarters is located in the central heart of the city, they maintain a large network of precinct houses, armories, and garrisons all across the dimensions. Still, Cynosure is an enormous city, full of violent and unusual crime, so the TDP is perpetually understaffed and overworked. Their current Commissioner is TDP Minister Javret Tuillons. He has a reputation as a stern and "by-the-book" man.

Shadow Cops

"Shadow Cops are an elite bunch of undercover cops. They work deep in the streets, playing bad guy to bust bad guys, keepin' their ears to the ground so as to nail the big stuff before it happens."

Shadow Cops are very good at their job, and many stay on the streets for years before finally retiring to less stressful departments. They report *only* to Deputy Commissioner Lillian Seffington, who is the only being who knows them all by sight.

Cadre

"Cadre was Cynosure's answer to the Dancer's rebellion. Cadre's orders were simple: to deal with any and all threats to the city's safety. Between them and the TDP no love was lost, though some blood was." - GrimJack

Cadre began with only twelve operatives, working directly under Director Mayfair. It grew quickly over the years, using the city's natural paranoia to gain power and influence, until today it fills a 40-story fortress headquarters near the center of the city. While the TDP is (theoretically) expected to always follow the law, Cadre's sole purpose is to get results at any cost. A deep enmity exists between the two organizations, and firefights have been known to break out between their operatives in the field. Cadre is much smaller than the TDP, but its skill at subterfuge and deception more than makes up for the discrepancy.

Though Cadre officially works for the Council of Ministers, Mayfair never briefs them before beginning an operation, and only rarely informs them afterward. Only Cadre's impressive record of weeding out threats to the city allows Mayfair this degree of autonomy.

Places in the City

The Arena

Before bloodsports were outlawed in Cynosure, the Arena was home to gladiator combats of all kinds, from large-scale skirmishes to the horrific wolfpacs, young children trained to fight animals. The Arena still stands, though it is now used as government storage.

Cynomall

An enormous shopping center, made up of thousands of independent shops, some permanent, others phasing in and out. Maps and kiosks scattered throughout the mall inform visitors of shops entering or leaving the mall.

Cynosure Grand Terminal

Central hub for the Eternity Rail, a major jumping off point for any number of realities.

Holly Memorial Stadium

The largest concert hall in all of Cynosure, able to seat nearly five million sentients.

The Levee

A sordid area of the city, specializing in catering to unusual sexual preferences. "Whatever is sexually possible is also profitable down on the Levee."

Outlands

"The ring of blasted and baked territory that rings Cynosure. Some thought it was a dimension of its own. Mostly what it was was desolate."

The Pit

"Where the dregs of Cynosure congeal." The Pit is one of the roughest slums in Cynosure, all but forgotten by the rest of the city.

Sanctuary of the Dancing God

Also known as the Engulfed Cathedral, this gigantic landmark in the Pit can be seen for miles. It is an abandoned temple to an unknown god.

Suburbia

Suburbia is only one of dozens of similar dimensions, filled with green lawns and annoyingly friendly neighbors. Many corporations dedicate entire such dimensions to housing their employees.

University of Cynosure

U-Cyn is a giant floating sphere, “the only artificially created dimension in Cynosure. All rules of science, magic, and alien technologies work within its walls- the better to be explored and exploited.” The university’s motto is “Knowledge in pursuit of excellence.”

Uptown

If dimensions like *Suburbia* are for the middle class, dimensions like *Uptown* are for the upper class. Uptown in particular is a dimension “where the streets are clean, the view Olympian, and the people live like gods and goddesses.”

Equipment

A-rad Serum

An anti-radiation drug that confers limited tolerance to the ill effects of radiation, for a short time.

Bugeye

A flying remote camera/sensor, about the size and shape of a fly.

Chronomaster

A communication device and beacon for a TTB (Temporal Teleport Beam). Time travelers without a chronomaster can not be retrieved from the timelines.

Electrolash

A powered whip, capable of delivering painful electric shocks.

Joybuzzer

A high voltage antipersonnel weapon, usually worn on the palm of the hand.

Miller Medallion

An enchanted medallion which glows green in the presence of supernatural energies.

Portable Reality Generator (PRG)

PRGs are “the most closely guarded secret in the TDP arsenal.” They are “back pack sized units which project a relative functional reality around the wearer...lets your weapons and vehicle work no matter what the physical laws are of the dimension you’re in.”

Qwikdethtm Heat Seeking Bullets

Available in many different calibers, and keyed to many different species.

RatBot

Similar to a *Bugeye*, but in the rough shape of a rat.

Razorwhip

A whip with attached razor-sharp barbs.

St. Elron Vial

An enchanted vial of silver nitrite, which allows certain spells to be absorbed and possible hurled back at their caster.

St. John’s Knives

Blessed, silver knives, useful against a wide variety of supernatural creatures.

Somnambutoltm

A very powerful, but very expensive, sleep drug.

Stim

A powerful and highly addictive “berserker” drug.

Vamp Dust

Garlic dust, used when combating vampires. “Hurts ‘em about as much as silver dust and costs a lot less. Keeps ‘em from shapechanging as well.”

Weaponry

Almost any kind of weapon can be found in Cynosure, from wooden staves to man-portable particle beams.

Lexicon

ACs

Workers/goons of the Alpha Cetaurii Commercial Empire (ACCE)

Air Yourself

Take it outside; get out of my face.

Aristos

The rich, especially the young, idle rich.

Bounty Mouny

Bounty hunter.

Bravo

A young punk.

Chicken Hawks

Those who prey on the very young and the very alone.

Chopper

Hired muscle; a goon.

Demon Chic

A style of dress devoted to looking undead or supernatural.

Floater

A dimension that “floats” in and out of synch with Cynosure on an irregular schedule.

Hard Timers

Bounty hunters who specialize in timeline jobs.

Merk

A “merchandiser”; a businessman.

Migs

Migrant workers; the lowest class of laborers.

Pup

A young or inexperienced fighter; an unskilled tough guy.

Slide Out

Get out; back off.

Sugarcoats

“Hallucinogenic addictives for which there is no known cure. The addict can live a long time with them, but they invariably die screaming without them.”

TD Pigs

Transdimensional police officers.

TTB

Temporal transport beam, the mechanic used in time traveling.

Sample Races

Ch'ukee

A race of baby talking “cute, fuzzy animals,” such as teddy bears and mice. They rarely leave their home dimension of singing flowers and a talking sun since very few sentients in Cynosure can stand being around them.

Ethayr

“A race of exquisite, ethereal beings who inhabit two or more separate planes of existence at the same time. For them, the difference between reality and dream is nonexistent. They are also the most sensual of lovers, the most prestigious of spouses.”

Ghosts

“Parapsychological manifestations of the deceased’s remorse, often repeating certain patterns of behavior until relieved of that remorse.”

Lupoos

Six foot tall, evil “killer rabbits”; the sworn enemies of the *Ch'ukee*.

Psyphalogenes

Also known as “Jelly Babies.” These scavengers (they don’t eat living food) are “immense creatures, like two-story jelly fish, who swim in a thick gaseous dimension.”

Vampires

A powerful race of supernatural creatures; they are able to shapechange into the form of a wolf, bat, man, or a cloud of mist. Vampires must drink fresh blood each day or they begin to weaken. The only way to truly kill a vampire is to decapitate it, stuff its mouth with garlic, purify it with flame, cleanse it with running water, and let the ashes wash away, never to mingle again.

Character Creation

(Naturally the GM should feel free to use whatever guidelines he wants during character creation – these are just the notes I used for my own group, using GURPS 3rd edition).

The guidelines for creating characters are pretty simple- you can use up to 150 points, with no more than 30 points of disadvantages. There are no caps on attributes. Due to the unique nature of the setting just about any skill or advantage is possible, as long as it can be somehow justified in the character's background/history. (Naturally this doesn't mean *anything* is allowed...the GM may have to veto extremely powerful or abusable powers. If you have any question about particular advantages or skills, just ask). So far the only skill I've had to add is *Area Knowledge: Cynosure*; this is a M/VH skill, due to the nature of the city, and only a critical success will guarantee accurate results (the makeup of Cynosure changes a *lot*).

In addition to the infinite number of dimensions available, characters can also be from various Earth times. Though time travel is extremely difficult and costly in Cynosure, it isn't unheard of. So if you *really* want your character to be from Earth, or any time from Earth's past, it can be done.

Most of Cynosure's citizens appear to be humanoid, though there are certainly numerous exceptions. Extra limbs, extra eyes, wild skin colors, even psionics are all possible. Basically, just go nuts and make whatever kind of character you want to- anything I don't feel I can handle I'll just let you know and we can work on changing it. However, be careful not to create a character so "alien" that it's impossible to properly roleplay! (For instance, you could conceivably create a character who was a sentient cube of slime, but how exactly would you roleplay that in a group of humanoids?).

Below you'll find a questionnaire designed to help build a fleshed-out character. I know these can sometimes be a drag, but they *really* help me keep tabs on all the PCs. Please do your best to jot down something for all the questions, especially the four at the end. Thanks for taking the time to make great characters!

PC Questionnaire

Name: Age: Sex: Height: Weight:
Skin Color: Eye Color: Hair Color/Style:
Distinguishing Features:
Characteristic Gestures:
Home Dimension Description:
Time in Cynosure:
Family Background:
Religion/Spirituality:
Academic Experience:
Military/Law Experience:
Occupation: Past Occupations:
Positive Traits:
Bad Habits/Vices:
Prejudices:
Personality Summary:
Favorite Pastime: Favorite Drink: Favorite Meal:
Clothing Style/Favorite Outfits:
Typical Quote(s):
History/Background:

- 1) In an abstract sense, what are some of the things that *really* matter to your character? Is there anything he aspires to? Anything he is passionate about? Anything he would give his life for? (Examples: honor, equality, truth, compassion, wealth, power)
- 2) In concrete terms, what are some things your PC really wants/desires? These could be material things, changes in the character, changes in other characters, changes in the environment, whatever. Which one thing does he desire most? (Examples: to be mayor, to be rich, to own a laser rifle, to find a family member, to gain a rep)
- 3) For each thing desired, explain why. Don't stop at the surface reason...give some thought to what ultimate need the PC is fulfilling by getting what he wants. (Examples: hunger, security, love, pleasure, recognition)
- 4) How might getting what he wants change the character, particularly as relates to question 1? (Examples: he would be happier, he could stop searching, he could settle down and raise a family)