

City of Seck

General Impression

The city of Seck is home to about 25,000 people who live under rather crowded conditions behind the Curtain of Flame which protects the city from outside threats. The place is often quite hot, very busy, and never silent. Architecturally, there is a mixture of World Before buildings (some medieval), new buildings, and mixtures between the two. The new buildings consist mostly of wood and recycled car parts but the most important buildings are made from stone blocks carved from the ruins surrounding the city.

Seck is ruled by a council of 10 Brunites and 3 elders from each of the other tribe.

A Brief History of Seck

Before the Free People came to Seck, the ruins of former Seckenheim were inhabited by a tribe of Squats who practised the unholy art of Sundering. In **2058**, the Fatimas liberated and physically purified the Free People and in a bloody battle led them out of the death camps into the ruins of Seck, chasing away the evil tribe, which fled to Schrie.

In **2059**, the Z'Bri, having recovered from the losses inflicted due to their surprise, attacked the new settlement. Thor, the most powerful and most fanatical of the Fatimas battled against the Overlord, the leader of the Z'Bri and both perished due to the massive magic used by both. The remaining Z'Bri fell into a civil war and retreated to their ziggurats while Brun conjured the mighty Curtain of Flame.

2080 was a year of war, when the dispossessed madmen from Schrie started attacking the city. However the curtain of Flame kept them out and a retaliatory

expedition greatly reduced the Schrie threat for almost 25 years.

In the winter of **2095**, the temperatures were surprisingly high and the Little Brother started to flood, temporarily extinguishing the Curtain of Flame and destroying most of the Lokite quarter, a stroke from which the Lokites still suffer. The sudden lack of protection led to an assault by Steiner, one of the more fanatic Z'Bri and Veterans of the skirmish can still be recognised today, shuffling through Coaltown, their eyes completely empty due to the terror they experienced.

The last event of importance was the Coaltown food riot in **2106**. Even today, Valkyries are highly unpopular in Coaltown and rarely go there at night.

Living in Seck

People usually live with their family in the quarter of their tribe. Houses are owned by those who live there, only domestics and other retainers live in the houses of their masters. Most families have at least two or three hunters or foragers, only the Freyans perform any noteworthy agriculture and sell their goods on the market in their quarter. The rest of the family often specialises in a certain craft, e.g. metalwork, pottery etc. Some citizens of Seck turn their back on the traditional family structure and chose to live in so-called cells. A cell is a group of three to ten people who share a common agenda. For example, the "Red Hand" is a group of two Brunites and a Lokite who patrol the area outside the city to keep it clean of Z'Bri influence. Transportation in the city is mostly by foot or by horse, carts can only pass through the main street. Some of the rich use palanquins, carried by particularly powerful domestics.

The law in the city is kept up by the Valkyries, a police force answerable only to the Council and the priestesses

of Brun. While there is a written codex of law, most citizens are unaware of its precise contents and the opinion on what is legal or not varies from person to person. Generally, the concepts of crime are reasonable but punishments are strict, often consisting of physical punishment or executions. Interestingly, drugs are not illegal if used responsibly. On the other hand, disrespect towards the Fatimas is a harsh crime. Anything which shows the taint of the demonic Z'Bri, including *serfs* (humans altered by the demons) are usually hunted down without mercy but there are some notable exceptions - the city does not forget who did them valuable services in the past and there are at least five serfs who have become (second class) citizens of Seck.

The Quarters

There are 5 quarters in the city, one for each Tribe and the last one a slum of the poor. The temples of the different Fatimas are each located in the quarter of their respective tribe.



Council Quarter

The council quarter (*Ratsviertel*) is home to the Council Hall and the buildings of the richest tribe, the Brunites. The quarter contains mostly old world buildings or nice blends of old and new that combine wood and stone in a pleasing way and are decorated with carved statues of ancient heroes and of Brun.

The most impressive building is the Citadel of Brun, towering over the Council Hall and leaving no doubt who is in charge here.

The poorer Brunites live in the East but are still relatively well off. Those who cannot afford to live in the Council Quarter live in the slums of Coaltown.

Bone Ward

Gebeinbezirk, is less noisy than the rest of the town which is attributed to the demure nature of the Helites, who live here. The buildings are less impressive here than in the Council Quarter, many incorporating car wrecks etc. which have been worked on to fit into the general structure. The most striking part is the heavy use of death symbolism, often in the form of real human and animal skulls etc. There are many rumours of ghosts living in the Bone Ward but the Helites are not those who would tolerate such a thing to happen.

The ward is dominated by the Church of Redemption, the shrine to Hel which is an expansion of an older building from the World Before. Next to it is the field of urns where the dead of all tribes rest.

Shire Quarter

The Freyans reside in the *Auenviertel*, a quarter with comparably large amounts of green, in the form of little gardens growing on the flat roofs of the wooden buildings, small parks guarded from would-be vandals by priestesses, and buildings using living trees as part of their architecture. There is little left of the World Before here and most of the Freyans prefer to live in a rather organic way. The quarter has had many problems with fires and the lifestyle here is a lot simpler than in the quarters of the powerful tribes of Hel and Brun.

Freya's temple is a horseshoe-shaped grove of trees which grow close enough

to resemble a building. An unnatural darkness subsists inside, making it impossible to see from the outside what is happening on its premises. Sometimes at night Freya's wailing can be heard by those passing by.

Quarter of Bells

Loki resides in the *Glockenviertel*, which gets its names from the many bells of all sizes which can be found on the top of every house. Loki is a very active Fatima, often striding through the quarter, using his staff to strike the bells on his way. Many buildings in the quarter are little more than scrap heaps, chaotic and statically questionable constructs built from old metal parts. Unlike the Bone Ward where the scrap metal has been worked to fit nicely into the new buildings, here the shape of the material dictates the shape of the buildings rather than the other way round. Most people dress in gaudy colours and offer various services, making the Quarter of Bells the centre of amusement in the city.

Coaltown

Coaltown (*Kohlestadt*), the cinder-smearred outer ring of the city, is home to the poorest who cannot afford to live in the quarters of their tribes. Many are half-crazy, invalids, or otherwise impaired. Coaltown is a dangerous area and few tribe members wish to go here after dark. The nearby Curtain of Flame illuminates the place day and night and the constant heat (even though it is less than it should be for flames that size) makes it very unpleasant to live here.



The secret rulers of Coaltown are the various street gangs who do not dare to attack the inner quarters and who are divided enough to keep themselves busy.

Organisations

There are many organisations residing in Seck. While some are associated with a certain tribe, others have members from all over the city.

Valkyries

The Valkyries are a group of men and (mostly) women who have risen high in the favour of Brun and who are charged with keeping order in the city. It is no surprise that these individuals are not well liked in the quarters of other tribes, constantly reminding them about who is keeping up the flames which protect the city.

Hel's Angels

The Angels are a group of riders in black leather with white faces and ornamental metal wings, wielding scythes, who are charged with overseeing the order in the Bone Ward, a concession made by Brun for the support given to her by Hel. They are also charged with protecting the Church and high ranking priestesses. The Angels are a creepy lot and many of them practice some rather nasty forms of Synthesis.

Daughters of Freya

The daughters of Freya are a group of healers and mediators who wander the

city in search for those in need for help. While the daughters are a benevolent organisation, there are those who wonder what the hidden agenda behind this level of charity really is and many believe that the healers are also an extraordinary spy apparatus.

Winter Wolves

The Winter Wolves are the assassins and spies of Loki, excellent acrobats with all kinds of nasty tricks and a twisted sense of humour. Their ceremonial dress is made of bleached wolf fur which is worn when meeting their Fatima but normally the Wolves blend in well with the normal populace. The wolves are renown for their special arrows which look like wooden snakes and which deal damage until they are removed from the wound.

Customs & Lifestyle

Birth, Life & Death Rituals

New-born children are baptised by a priestess of Freya, usually by submerging the infant in the water of the Little Brother, the river flowing past Seck. All relatives usually attend, wearing white if they can afford it.

The other great ritual is the *coming of age*, a ceremony performed on those who join a cell. The age for this varies and some people never join a cell at all.

Those who die are taken by the Helites and are prepared in a special way by taxidermy. Their stuffed bodies are then stored in the halls of the dead, to be taken out on special occasions to partake in the lives of their relatives. After the last of their children has died, the bodies are disassembled and the skin is stored in the Great Hall, often tattooed with family mottos or emblems.

There are no other rituals performed, for example, there is no formal marriage.

Communication

The easiest form of communication within the city is using runners, usually young boys from Coaltown who want to make some money. Runners typically wear the symbol of speed - which looks something like a hook or curving streak - somewhere on their body.

Those who can afford it and want quick and safe communication will use pigeons or supernatural means.

Also, rumours persist that the Winter Wolves of Loki communicate using huge bells but how they can distinguish the random ringing in their quarter from real messages is anybody's guess.

Food

Food is generally simple, mostly meat and plants foraged from the woods outside of the city. There is a little bit of agriculture and the occasional chicken or pig owned by a rich household but these are saved for special occasions. Since spices are very rare, the food tends to be bland.

Government

The city is officially ruled by the High Council which consists of 10 Brunites and 3 elders from the other tribes. The Brunites are chosen by Brun herself, the other tribes go by seniority.

Holidays

There are few holidays in the city of Seck. October 3rd is the liberation day, when the Fatimas led the escape from the death camps and the day is celebrated with parades and many special activities. February 6th is Loki's day, when people play pranks on each other and dress up in costumes for parties.

Law and Order

The law is kept by the Valkyries. Priestesses of Brun who are within their ranks are allowed to be judge and jury in one but are usually fair if a bit harsh and uncaring. Generally it is forbidden to bear arms larger than a knife with the only exception being Brunites and Hel's Angels.

Nightlife

Most people prefer to stay at home at night for there are no streetlights, the Curtain of Flame being the only illumination and there are many dark corners where some misfortune can befall honest tribe members. The only place where people go at night in greater quantities is the Glockenviertel.

Recreation

The most popular legal entertainment is dance and song among the followers of Hel and Freya, a rather martial sport called "Ball und Faust" among the Brunites, and watching illusions woven by their priests among the Lokites. Recreational drug use is also widely accepted, often with a mystical undertone. The most popular illegal activities are prostitution and watching gladiatorial battles fought in abandoned ruins just outside the city, often before a rather small audience.

Transportation

Those who can afford it usually travel by horse or with palanquins. The streets are generally too narrow to use carts and there is too much trash on the streets not to get stuck all the time.

Waste Disposal

There is little waste disposal to speak of but the Helite priestesses pay some money for those who bring them dead bodies, so at least those are not left out

in the streets. Only the quarter of the Brunites is relatively clean with domestics of the richer families cleaning the roads every three weeks.

Lifestyle of the Brunites

The Brunites typically dress in leather and armour pieces which are created by their excellent armoursmiths. They generally dislike scavenged materials from the World Before, preferring new and elegant things. A rich Brunite is typically armed with a blade or two. Brunites tend to be arrogant due to their position of power and are very martial in their customs, even those who are not warriors.

The priestesses of Brun and their Valkyrie paladins typically dress in metal armour with baroque golden ornaments. Their favoured weapon is the javelin, as it can be thrown with one hand and thus still allowing the use of a shield, and the longsword for close combat. Males wishing to join their ranks have to become eunuchs in order to "improve their connection to the goddess".

Lifestyle of the Helites

Helites are considered a depressing lot by the other tribes, being obsessed with death and the constant fear that the world will be overrun by undead. The Helites disdain noise and hectic activity and prefer to dress in black, paint their skin white, and sport impressive piercings.

The priestesses and priests of Hel often wear monastic robes of black, often with human bones dangling from their belts. Due to their power over death and their link to the burial rituals, they are highly respected among all tribes, even though non-Helites consider them a bit creepy.

Lifestyle of the Freyans

Freyans value peace and family, doing their best to keep up personal relationships and family bonds. On the other hands, they are a bit conservative, eschewing change and outside influences. The stereotypical Freyan is a woman in her mid-forties who has the air of a matriarch and who is somewhat controlling.

Freyans love to wear clothing made from wool, wood, and other natural materials. Many of them are vegetarians and few wear weapons unless absolutely required. Their priestesses, males are not allowed to join the priesthood, perform the daily rituals and are allowed to enter any Freyan household whenever they want, even though this is seldom abused.

Lifestyle of the Lokites

The Lokites are only tolerated in Seck because of the usefulness of their Fatima. As the only tribe dominated by males, they tend towards jobs such as merchant or warrior, even though many Lokites prefer ranged combat to melee.

Lokites like to wear bright clothing with simple geometric patterns. Their priests often have little bells and small trinkets attached to their dress. Only in war do the Lokites dress more practical, usually wearing leather armour and wielding bows. The high priests are known for their infamous Loki Bows which imbue their arrows with strange synthesis, causing the targets to be paralysed, sporting a ghastly grin.

Places of Interest

Shire Quarter

Smiling Dragon Dojo

Generally, a Freyan is the last person one would expect to be a renown swordsman, but Yoshi-Sensei is the

exception to the rule. While old and frail, Yoshi runs a fencing school from this poorly lit basement. While he demands steep prices, he trains those he likes for a bit of food. Interestingly, Yoshi likes those people best who cook well, at least that's what some gossips claim.

Quarter of Bells

Company of the Stone

The cell called Company of the Stone resides in an impressive three-winged building constructed mostly out of old cars and steel plates welded together. The Company consists of twelve men who share a common experience - the sighting of a falling star 5 years go. Touched by its holy energy, or so the tale goes, the twelve were gifted with extraordinary good fortune and managed to become rich traders and lenders of equipment. The fragment of the star resides in a special chamber at the centre of their shop/warehouse. Two of them even live there and the others have houses nearby.

Red Hedgehog

The Hedgehog is a popular place run by a greasy little guy called Reed Aquisitus. It is basically a watering hole with some prostitution on the side.

Coaltown

The Black Sisters' Hospital for the Dying (Sterbespital der Schwarzen Schwestern)

The hospital for the dying, run by the black sisters, is a place which offers free treatment for the poor but has a very bad reputation. Located in a World Before building of dubious origin, the hospital is dark and quiet, save for the screams of the dying. The treatments are simple, painful, and often rather radical but still for those who have no other chance, the

place is the last straw. The hospital for the dying is run by several followers of Hel, a fact which has led to many bad rumours.

Daily Market

There is a small marketplace in the western part of Coaltown where traders of all kinds put up their stalls every day to sell everything from household goods to food. The quality of the merchandise is poor but the prices are affordable. The only problem are the many pickpockets which frequent the place and there is an ongoing joke about the pickpocket that has been robbed there.

Grove of the Bloodwillows

In the southern part of Coaltown there is a small grove of trees which are miraculously untouched by the fire-wood-hungry denizens of the shanty town. Rumour has it that the spirits of the trees, called the Gaunt Family, barely tolerate humans and are more than willing to strike out against those who hurt their trees.

Karl's Meatshop

About the only place that deals in meats in Coaltown, Karl's meatshop buys and sells anything Karl can get his hands on. Since the place is located so near the hospital for the dying, there are some who speculate on the origin of some of the meats, usually resulting in Karl flying into a rage.

Tavern of the Little Brother

This dreadful watering hole near the Curtain is mostly made of cardboard covered with thick layers of epoxy and the only wall that still stands of a World Before house. While the place is very cheap, the customers are mostly gang members who do not like outsiders a lot.