

Drakkenheim: Resurrection

A Campaign Guide by O;N

Chapter 4: Emberwood Village

Before the Book

Emberwood Village is, as of the time of me writing this, a collection of descriptions across dozens of episodes of a liveplay campaign, so I can't make specific comments or edits regarding its presentation in the book. I can, however, give some broad strokes that will hopefully be helpful for DMs running before the book comes out.

Update: I'm impressed by the thoroughness of the Emberwood Village chapter in the book, and I have very little to add. In fact, I actually have some things to remove. "A designer knows he has achieved perfection not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away." - Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

How Emberwood Village Fits into the Campaign

Dungeons and Dragons as a game is mechanically structured around the idea of the short and long rests: an adventuring day is meant to have several encounters to slowly wear away your resources, several being between 6 and 8, with 2-3 short rests.

However, Drakkenheim on its own isn't especially equipped to fulfill that fantasy, and that's for one simple reason: Everything in Drakkenheim is meant to be scary. If you can shrug off the first three encounters of the day, you're probably not adventuring in Drakkenheim. Drakkenheim is the type of place where you leave Emberwood Village in the morning and head in the general direction of Temple Gate, get in a random encounter with a bunch of gnolls, and immediately decide to retreat to recover your resources.

As such, I think Emberwood Village's distance from Drakkenheim fits it into an interesting position: Emberwood is so far outside the city walls that it may engender a sense of "we came this far, are we going to turn back just because a pack of gnolls used up our highest-level spell slots?" Now, that might be what a DM would like to hear, but a different sense it might engender might be "we've been adventuring for 4.5 hours (yes, 4 of those were traveling from Emberwood Village to the City, but let's ignore that), that gnoll attack was harsh, I'm spent, let's go back."

Emberwood as a Home Base

Drakkenheim as a game can be very taxing on your players, emotionally I mean. Everything in the city is bizarre and mind-warping, it's violent and vicious, and if the monsters and mutation weren't bad enough, you have to put up with five conniving factions who can't seem to find it in their hearts to approve of your monster-killing and delerium-collecting.

Emberwood Village, then, should serve as a nice home base for your players. In the early game, I would say, it could still be appropriate to have some altercations between the factions in Emberwood Village, but for most of the mid-game, going to Emberwood should feel like going home. Emberwood Village should not be destroyed except perhaps in the very endgame as a signal that conflicts of Drakkenheim are starting to spread to the wider world.

As a home base, a literal home base might be prudent in Emberwood: maybe a PC has or had family in Emberwood Village, a place where the PCs can sleep in a nice warm hay bale and eat some warm stew. Maybe the PCs save a family member of a local important person, like a hotel owner, reeve, or other wealthy or powerful individual. That person then becomes a patron of the PCs, bestowing them a property or other place to stay.

Emberwood as a Storefront

Delerium is valuable in the world, and perhaps the best way to express that is through using it as currency to buy special items. Where can you buy these special items? In Emberwood Village, of course.

Emberwood should be a place where you can buy all the equipment in the PHB. Aldor the Immense or a similar magic-item-vendor NPC should be located here as well. Players come into Emberwood with piles of treasure and delerium, and they leave with magic items.

Emberwood as Neutral Ground for the Factions

The Five Factions are an extension of the central tension that lies at the heart of the Drakkenheim game (what should be done with the city / throne; what should be done with the delerium), and the balance between them is at its best when they have to contend ideologically on neutral ground. Each of the five factions should have a presence in Emberwood Village, a location or contact to whom the players can go and hang their hang on that faction.

While I mentioned that Emberwood is a storefront, I think it would add a lot of texture to break the storefront into more specialized locations - the Queen's Men will sell you delerium, items retrieved from the ruins, poisons, and simple weapons, while the Falling Fire prefer to accept payment in delerium and give magical cleric-like items and blessings. Suffice it to say, Emberwood Village is a chance to allow differences in the factions to emerge organically and nonviolently.

Emberwood as an Expression of the Wider World

Over the course of the campaign, let Emberwood Village really blossom. The more successful the PCs are, the more they'll inspire new adventurers to come to the prospector town. The more delerium is excavated from richer veins within the city walls, the more moneyed interests will come to Emberwood to carve out their slice of the pie. Emberwood is a good place to let noncombatants come into your story whose primary function is to inform the PCs of the developments of the wider world, and the effect that their actions have on it.

Locations of Emberwood Village

u/side-way has made a stupendous isometric map for Emberwood Village. Their reddit post can be found [here](#), a link to the night version is [here](#), and the labeled version is [here](#).

I have nothing to add to the locations of Emberwood Village. All of them seem well-done. Too well done.

Emberwood Village is only a small part of the campaign, and while adding more things will make it feel more fleshed out, the truth is that you probably don't need as many things as are included.

Four unique establishments aren't needed in Emberwood Village - it becomes four locations for your PCs to hold in their heads, four wires to be crossed. I'll tell you, you only need two for your campaign: the Good One and the Bad One.

The Good One is an establishment that is more classy and expensive, more tame, but also much safer. PCs can rest here in an uncomplicated manner, and the rumors heard within will be about the goings-on of the factions and visitors to Emberwood Village, as well as the wider world. The Bad One is more seedy and rustic, and you might end up involved in a bar-fight, but it's cheaper and you're much more likely to get relevant information about Drakkenheim and rumors and hooks therein.

In such a scheme where the establishments are reduced to two, combine the Bark & Buzzard and the Skull & Sword; also combine the Gilded Lily and the Red Lion Hotel.

The only addition I have for the establishments is the following: at the outset of the campaign, no one knows the Purge Contamination spell. If the PCs get contaminated, they'll be directed to the Skull and Sword, where they in turn will point the PCs towards camp of Deceit by the Bullywug Pond (see [Outer City Locations](#)). If the PCs are trusted friends of the Queen's Men, they'll be given a password.

Four unique tradesmen probably aren't needed either. Eren Marlowe could probably pick up the role of Armin Gainesbury, while Aldor the Immense could make a fine delirium-dealer instead of Orson Fairweather.

The one lack I see in Emberwood is a lack of a true station for the Amethyst Academy. Is it not suitable for the Academy to have refurbished the Eventide Manor, and drawn the curtains so that no one knows the true extent of the comings and goings?

NPCs of Emberwood Village

One thing I've learned over the course of DMing is that the fewer the NPCs, the better. If you have an NPC that you think fills an important part of your story, I'd urge you to go to one of your PCs and approach them and see if the character they're building can fill that role in the story.

NPCs talking to each other is rough. Players having to remember two dozen names is rough. If you have two NPCs that you can roll into just one and have that one NPC fulfill both roles in the story, you have cut down on a lot of your work, as well as the mental effort of your players to keep everything straight in their head.

That being said, Drakkenheim needs a lot of NPCs, and that's for one reason: NPCs will give texture to the factions, and the factions really need texture. Like, they *really* need texture.

Like, the five faction leaders and six lieutenants are all necessary, and if you add just one “grunt” in each faction to give just one other facet of life on the ground, that’s already 15 NPCs your players have to keep straight.

In this pursuit, you should probably ask your players to take notes. Further, you can use the broad role-playing traits assigned to the faction at-large as will be included in the book to just whip up “generic grunt”.

Each NPC should serve a purpose. Either they have some personal tie to a PC, they offer texture on their specific faction, or they give an outside opinion. If they don’t do these things, then it’s okay to just have them be a pure NPC. When I say that, I mean someone you walk up to and press “A” to talk to them. In such cases, “Tobias Crowe” can lose his identity and just become “the Blacksmith.” The barkeep at the Red Lion Hotel can be referred to simply as “the Proprietor”. This is another factor in eliminating the Bark & Buzzard and Gilded Lily by rolling them into the other two - now, you don’t need to remember Holger Alsborg, Karin Alsborg, Killian Vandire, nor Madam Rochelle (or, at your discretion, keep these and remove any others). This applies similarly to the traders.

Developments in Emberwood Village

Besides buying things and sleeping, Emberwood Village is a place for your players to do things. What kinds of things?

- **Get plot hooks.** Emberwood Village will be a place that lieutenants can give quests, that PCs can discover happenings throughout the city, can learn rumors of treasure, etc.
- **Discover things.** While inside Drakkenheim is where most of the shocking revelations and true developments of the campaign will take place, Emberwood Village can still be a place to find out truths about the factions, research uses of delerium, learn about the history of the area, and be honest and open with each other.
- **Plan their next steps.** While being in the city might reduce you to a single instinct (survive), being in Emberwood Village lets you plot more carefully your timetable, and openly discuss each PC’s thoughts on the current situation and the factions.
- **Take downtime.** Whatever that entails in your games, if your players are taking downtime, it’s probably going to be in Emberwood Village.

Rumors

Rumors are best picked up in Emberwood Village, but they could potentially be picked up anywhere. With what I’ve added to the campaign, here is a modified table of rumors:

1-3	<i>Rumor 1-4</i> (“Don’t go...”) <i>add:</i> Don’t even enter the gaol .
4-6	<i>Rumor 5-8</i> (“The Trolls...”)
7-9	<i>Rumor 9-12</i> (“Queen’s Park...”)

10-12	<i>Rumor 13-16</i> ("Someone has...")
13-15	<i>Rumor 17-20</i> ("The Black...")
16-18	<i>Rumor 21-24</i> ("There is..."). <i>Alternative:</i> You see spooky things in the ruins. The Rose Theatre , for instance, still advertises a new release every week.
19-21	<i>Rumor 25-28</i> ("The Queen's...")
22-24	<i>Rumor 29-32</i> ("It's said...")
25-27	<i>Rumor 33-36</i> ("The strange...")
28-30	<i>Rumor 37-40</i> ("The Followers...")
31-33	<i>Rumor 41-44</i> ("Elias Drexel...")
34-36	<i>Rumor 45-48</i> ("The Archmage...")
37-39	<i>Rumor 49-52</i> ("The Knights...")
40-42	<i>Rumor 53-56</i> ("The Noble...")
43-45	<i>Rumor 57-60</i> ("I heard...")
46-48	<i>Rumor 61-64</i> ("Deep beneath...")
49-51	<i>Rumor 65-68</i> ("The Crown...")
52-54	<i>Rumor 69-72</i> ("A shrine...")
55-57	<i>Rumor 73-76</i> ("A dwarven...")
58-60	<i>Rumor 77-80</i> ("Exploring the...")
61-63	<i>Rumor 81-84</i> ("Queen Lenore's...")
64-66	<i>Rumor 85-88</i> ("The inner...")
67-69	<i>Rumor 89-92</i> ("A flock...")
70-72	<i>Rumor 93-96</i> ("Whispers say...")
73-75	<i>Rumor 97-00</i> ("Many of...")
76-78	If you get contaminated, there's an angel that fell to earth and lives in the ruins. Visit his home in a sewer grate, his touch heals the contamination (Bullywug's Pond).
79-81	If you see a clump of moss growing in the ruins, don't touch it. All the moss is part of one whole, and they never forget a face (The Mass).
82-84	Don't you know that trolls love bridges (Champion's Bridge)?

85-87	All the gangs in the city are allied under that Queen of Thieves ... well, all except one. Some goblinoids in a basement are still holding out (Backbreaker's Lair).
88-90	I wonder what happened to all those exotic animals in the Zoo when the meteor fell? That housed some crazy beasts, like a giant lizard (The Royal Zoo).
91-93	South of the City, there's a ruined manor-house whose gardens are still intact. I've seen lights and heard the buzzing chatter of partygoers still there, but I've been too afraid to get close. (The Sanguine Gala)
94-96	There's a demon in the city. He's fickle, and he could grant your wish or ruin your life (Guildmaster's Establishment).
97-99	The Guildhall Vaults housed fantastic treasure, but no one who's gone there has ever come back alive (Guildhall).

It's relevant to note that with this revision, there is no option for 00. You could reroll 00, or you could pick one of these 33 rumors that you'd like to be slightly more likely. My personal pick here is the fish people, as players don't have a strong reason to go see the Duchess except for the invitation of the fish people. Maybe for 00, you could tell your players plainly the location of one of the *Seals* or *Relics*.

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