SOFTWARE & TECH

Dungeons And Dragons Dungeon Module T 1 The Village Of Hommlet

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795580777467101

Introduction: The Humble Beginning of a Legendary Campaign

Few modules in the history of tabletop roleplaying games carry the weight and nostalgia of **Dungeons And Dragons Dungeon Module T 1 The Village Of Hommlet** . Published in 1979 by TSR, this low-level adventure was designed by the legendary Gary Gygax himself. It served as the starting point for one of the most iconic and challenging campaign series in D&D history: the Temple of Elemental Evil. For decades, players have stepped into the boots of fledgling adventurers arriving in a quiet, rustic settlement, unaware that beneath its peaceful surface lurks a growing corruption. This module is more than just a collection of rooms and monsters; it is a masterclass in world-building, sandbox exploration, and the slow burn of a brewing evil. Whether you are a dungeon master looking to run a classic or a player curious about the roots of the hobby, understanding **Dungeons And Dragons Dungeon Module T 1 The Village Of Hommlet** is essential to appreciating the evolution of fantasy gaming.

The Historical Context of Module T1

To truly understand the impact of this module, one must look at the era in which it was released. The late 1970s were a formative time for Dungeons & Dragons. The game was still finding its identity, moving away from simple dungeon crawls toward more narrative-driven experiences. **Dungeons And Dragons Dungeon Module T 1 The Village Of Hommlet** was part of the "T" series, which stood for "Temple." It was intended as a direct precursor to the massive super-module, *The Temple of Elemental Evil* (T1-4).

What made this module revolutionary was its focus on a living, breathing community. While earlier modules often dropped players directly into a dungeon, Hommlet asked players to interact with a village first. This was a shift in design philosophy. Gygax wanted to create a sense of place. He populated Hommlet with detailed non-player characters (NPCs), each with their own motivations, secrets, and alignments. This approach gave the module a remarkable replayability. Players could spend sessions just talking to villagers, gathering rumors, and deciding whom to trust. The module was also notable for its difficulty. It was designed for a party of 4 to 7 characters of levels 1 to 3, but it offered no mercy. Gygax believed in challenging his players, and Hommlet was a perfect proving ground.

The Story and Setting: A Village on the Edge

The premise of **Dungeons And Dragons Dungeon Module T 1 The Village Of Hommlet** is elegantly simple. The village of Hommlet is a small, fortified farming community located on the borderlands of a troubled region. Years before the adventure begins, a powerful temple dedicated to the Elemental Evils was destroyed by a band of heroes. The temple was shattered, and its evil high priests were slain. The area found peace, and the

village of Hommlet was rebuilt on the ruins of that conflict.

However, peace is fragile. The module opens with strange rumors. Bandits have been seen on the roads. Strange lights flicker in the ruins of an old moathouse east of the village. Merchants are disappearing. The player characters arrive in Hommlet seeking work, adventure, or simply passage through the region. They quickly discover that the evil of the Temple of Elemental Evil was never truly eradicated. It is regrowing, like a cancer, beneath the feet of the unsuspecting villagers.

The genius of the setting is its atmosphere. The village feels real. It has a blacksmith, a temple, an inn, several farms, and a mill. The weather, the local gossip, and the simple routine of rural life all create a stark contrast to the horror lurking just outside the palisade walls. Players must learn to distinguish between genuine threats and red herrings. Is the friendly innkeeper actually a spy for the elemental cult? Is the eccentric hermit in the woods a threat or a potential ally? The module forces players to engage with the environment, rewarding curiosity and punishing recklessness.

Key Locations in Hommlet

The village of Hommlet is meticulously detailed, and several locations stand out as essential to any playthrough of **Dungeons And Dragons Dungeon Module T 1 The Village Of Hommlet** .

The Inn of the Welcome Wench

This is the social heart of the village. Run by the jovial but cunning Ostler Gundigoot, the inn is where adventurers gather rumors, hire hirelings, and rest between expeditions. The inn is also a subtle microcosm of the module's moral complexity. Several patrons have ties to the cult, and a sharp-eyed player might notice a whispered conversation or a furtive exchange. The inn provides a safe haven, but it is also a place of observation for the forces of evil.

The Church of St. Cuthbert

Headed by the stern but wise Canon Terjon, this temple serves as a bastion of lawful good in the region. St. Cuthbert is a god of retribution and common sense, and his followers in Hommlet are suspicious of the growing chaos. The church is a source of healing, information, and moral guidance. However, the church is also facing internal struggles. Canon Terjon is cautious and wary of adventurers, believing that the village's best defense is to remain quiet and unseen. Convincing him to support the party is a challenge in itself.

The Watchtower and Palisade

The village is defended by a wooden palisade and a sturdy watchtower. The local militia, led by the capable Sergeant Crumm, patrols the walls. This gives the village a sense of security, but it is a false comfort. The walls are enough to deter common bandits, but they offer little protection against the supernatural forces of the Elemental Evil. The watchtower also serves as a visual reminder that this community is a frontier settlement, always on alert.

The Ruined Moathouse

This is the primary dungeon of the module. Located a few miles east of Hommlet, the moathouse is a crumbling fortress built on a small island in a stagnant swamp. It is the lair of the bandits and the center of the cult's current operations. The moathouse is a multi-level dungeon, filled with traps, secret doors, and a variety of enemies. It is a perfect introductory dungeon for new players, offering a mix of combat, exploration, and puzzle-solving. The climax of the moathouse involves a confrontation with the high priest of the cult, Lareth the Beautiful, a charismatic and deadly cleric of the demoness Zuggtmoy.

The NPCs: Memorable Characters in a Small Village

Dungeons And Dragons Dungeon Module T 1 The Village Of Hommlet remains so beloved is its cast of characters. Gygax understood that a memorable story requires memorable people. Here are some of the most iconic NPCs.

- Ostler Gundigoot: The innkeeper. He is friendly, talkative, and completely neutral. He values profit and comfort over ideology. He is a reliable source of rumors and local news.
- Canon Terjon: The high priest of St. Cuthbert. He is lawful good but pragmatic and cautious. He does not trust adventurers easily and will test their moral fiber.
- Lareth the Beautiful: The main antagonist of the early part of the campaign. He is a high priest of the Temple of Elemental Evil. He is charismatic, cruel, and deeply corrupted. He is a formidable foe for a low-level party.
- Elmo: A seemingly simple-minded farmhand who is actually a spy for the forces of good. He is a ranger in disguise, keeping watch on the village's movements. Elmo is a fantastic example of hidden depth in an NPC.
- Burk and Terag: A pair of unscrupulous mercenaries who hang around the inn. They are potential hirelings, but they are also cowards and bullies. They can betray the party if the odds turn against them.
- Jaroo Ashstaff: The local druid. He is a neutral good character who is attuned to the natural world. He is suspicious of the church of St. Cuthbert and offers a different perspective on the region's balance. His grove is a place of healing and wisdom.

These characters are not static information dumps. They have goals, fears, and secrets. A good dungeon master can use these NPCs to create subplots, moral dilemmas, and unexpected alliances. The village of Hommlet is not just a backdrop; it is a stage, and these characters are the players on it.

Gameplay: Sandbox Exploration and Player Agency

When discussing **Dungeons And Dragons Dungeon Module T 1 The Village Of Hommlet** , one must praise its sandbox design. The module does not rail-road players. There is no forced sequence of events. Players arrive in the village, and they are free to explore. They can talk to everyone, investigate every building, or immediately head into the wilderness to find the moathouse.

This freedom is both a blessing and a curse. For new dungeon masters, the open-ended nature of the module can be intimidating. The module provides extensive notes on what happens if the players take certain actions, but it requires the DM to think on their feet. The village is designed to react to the players' decisions. If they kill an innocent NPC, the village will turn hostile. If they befriend the druid, they might gain access to healing potions. If they ignore the rumors, the cult's power will grow stronger over time.

The module also introduces the concept of "faction play." The village has several factions: the church of St. Cuthbert, the druidic circle, the merchant guild, and the secret cult. Players must decide which faction to align with. This adds a layer of political intrigue that is rare in introductory adventures. The moathouse itself is a classic dungeon crawl, but it is filled with tactical depth. The monsters use strategy. The cultists will flee to warn their leaders. The guards will set traps. The module encourages clever play, not just brute force.

Design Philosophy: Lessons from Gygax

Gary Gygax was a master of encounter design, and this module showcases his philosophy perfectly. First, he believed in verisimilitude. The dungeon makes sense. The moathouse was once a fortress, so it has a kitchen, a barracks, a prison, and a chapel. The monsters live there; they eat, sleep, and guard their treasure. This logic makes the dungeon feel real.

Second, Gygax was not afraid to be cruel. The module is difficult. A single unlucky roll can kill a character. The traps are deadly. The enemies are smart. This high-stakes environment teaches players to be cautious. They learn to scout ahead, to check for traps, and to negotiate when combat is not the best option. The module is a tutorial for survival in the brutal world of early D&D.

Third, the module rewards exploration. There are secret rooms, hidden treasures, and lore fragments throughout the village and the moathouse. Players who take the time to search are rewarded with powerful items and useful information. This encourages a playstyle that is slow, methodical, and thorough. It is a design philosophy that stands in stark contrast to the fast-paced, combat-heavy adventures of later editions.

Legacy: The Impact of T1 on D&D History

The legacy of **Dungeons And Dragons Dungeon Module T 1 The Village Of Hommlet** is immense. It was one of the first adventures to blend a sandbox village with a traditional dungeon. This formula became a template for countless other modules. It inspired the structure of later classics like *The Keep on the Borderlands* and *Against the Cult of the Reptile God*.

The module was later combined with three other parts to create the super-module *Temple of Elemental Evil* (T1-4), which is considered one of the greatest D&D adventures of all time. The village of Hommlet serves as the perfect starting point for that epic campaign. In 2003, Atari released a video game adaptation, The Temple of Elemental Evil: A Classic Greyhaw

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