SOFTWARE & TECH

Village Of Hommlet

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Introduction: The Enduring Appeal of The Village of Hommlet

For nearly half a century, the **Village of Hommlet** has stood as a cornerstone of fantasy role-playing. Originally published in 1979 by Gary Gygax for Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, this humble settlement is far more than a simple map of cottages and a tavern. It is a masterclass in world-building, a perfect starting point for fledgling adventurers, and a testament to the power of a well-crafted small community. The **Village of Hommlet** is often remembered as the gateway to the legendary Temple of Elemental Evil, but its true genius lies in the intricate web of NPCs, rumors, and hidden dangers that await within its borders. This article explores every facet of this classic module, from its history and geography to its lasting influence on tabletop gaming.

The Historical Context of Hommlet

To understand the **Village of Hommlet**, one must first grasp the events that shaped it. The village sits on the edge of the Gnarley Forest in the world of Greyhawk, near the ruins of the Temple of Elemental Evil. Decades before the module begins, a powerful cult amassed forces in that temple, threatening the entire region. Heroes rose to defeat the cult, but the temple was not completely destroyed—only sealed. The village of Hommlet was founded shortly after by survivors and settlers seeking a fresh start, but the shadow of the temple lingers.

The Aftermath of Conflict

The land around the **Village of Hommlet**still bears the scars of that ancient war. The infamous Moat House, a fortified outpost of the evil temple, lies in ruins just a few miles away. Small bands of monsters and outlaws plague the roads, and the villagers live in a constant state of uneasy vigilance. This tension makes Hommlet an ideal launching point for adventurers: it offers safety and resources while constantly hinting at the greater dangers beyond.

Geography and Layout of the Village

The **Village of Hommlet**is compact and well-organized, typical of a frontier settlement. A central crossroads forms the heart of the community, with key buildings clustered around it. The map includes:

- The Inn of the Welcome Wench: Run by the affable Ostler Gundigoot, this inn is the social hub. Adventurers can gather rumors, hire NPCs, and find lodging.
- Church of St. Cuthbert: A small but sturdy temple led by the zealous Canon Terjon. He seeks to root out evil and offers healing to those who prove their worth.
- The Trading Post: Owned by a merchant named Burne, who is more than he seems. He sells gear and often has jobs for capable individuals.
- Various Homes and Workshops: From the blacksmith to the miller, each NPC has a role and often a secret.

Key Locations Beyond the Village

Village of Hommlet serves as a base for exploring the surrounding wilderness. Notable points of interest include:

1. The Ruined Moat House: A classic dungeon crawl filled with gnolls, bugbears, and elemental-themed traps. This is the immediate goal for most parties.
2. The Temple of Elemental Evil: The massive, multi-level dungeon that gives the supermodule its name. Hommlet is the staging ground for delving into this enormous complex.
3. The Gnarley Forest: Home to fey, bandits, and ancient ruins. Many side quests lead into its depths.

Notable Inhabitants and Factions

What truly brings the **Village of Hommlet** to life is its cast of characters. Every villager has a personality, a motivation, and often a connection to the wider plot. Here are some of the most memorable:

The Welcoming Innkeeper: Ostler Gundigoot

Ostler is a friendly, rotund man who loves gossip. He knows everyone and everything that happens around Hommlet. He can steer adventurers toward the moat house or warn them of dangerous NPCs. His inn is the safest place in the village, but even here, spies may lurk.

The Secretive Wizard: Burne

Burne is the co-owner of the trading post and a wizard of moderate power. He and his partner Rufus (a fighter) have a hidden agenda: they protect the village from a distance and seek to destroy the temple's influence. Burne can be a powerful ally if the players earn his trust.

The Zealous Cleric: Canon Terjon

Canon Terjon of St. Cuthbert is a stern but fair man. He despises evil and will not hesitate to question the party's morals. He can provide healing and magical aid, but only if the adventurers prove they are not agents of chaos.

The Shadowy Agent: Spugnoir

A mysterious NPC who often appears in the inn, Spugnoir is a potential hireling. He is actually a spy for the temple, seeking to learn about the party's plans. Experienced players will suspect him, making his presence a perfect plot hook.

Adventure Hooks and Scenarios

The **Village of Hommlet** is a sandbox filled with seeds for multiple adventures. A skilled Dungeon Master (DM) can use these hooks to drive the campaign forward:

- The Moat House Expedition: The most obvious hook. Several NPCs, including Burne and Ostler, will pay the party to clear out the moat house and bring back evidence of the temple's activities.
- The Missing Merchants: A group of traders never reached Hommlet. The party can investigate, leading to a hidden bandit camp or a monster lair.
- The Cult Spies: Agents of the temple are infiltrating the village. Players can uncover the spies and foil their plans, gaining favor with the town leaders.
- The Old Mill: The miller reports strange noises at night. A small ghost or a hidden cache of treasure could be waiting.

Running Hommlet for Different Playstyles

The module can adapt to various tabletop styles. For a combat-heavy group, focus on the wilderness encounters and the moat house. For role-play enthusiasts, expand the NPC interactions and political tensions between the temple and the church. For a mystery campaign, turn the spy subplot into a full investigation.

Legacy and Influence

The **Village of Hommlet** has left an indelible mark on game design. It was one of the first published adventures to emphasize a "home base" that evolved over time. Later modules and entire campaign settings borrowed this concept, from the town of Phandalin in *Lost Mine of Phandelver* to the keep in *Keep on the Borderlands*. Gary Gygax's attention to detail inspired countless DMs to populate their own villages with memorable, non-player characters.

Modern Adaptations

In later editions of D&D, the **Village of Hommlet** was updated and expanded. The 5th edition compilation *Tales from the Yawning Portal* includes the moat house as a high-level dungeon, but the village itself remains a beloved classic. Many DMs still use the original module as a starting point for homebrew campaigns, proving that good design never goes out of style.

Why Hommlet Matters Today

In an age of sprawling campaign books and digital tools, the **Village of Hommlet** reminds us of the power of simplicity. A single village, with its bars, temples, and secrets, can launch a hundred epic stories. It teaches DMs that the best adventures begin not with a prophecy, but with a barkeep who knows too much and a ruined tower on the hill. For new players, it offers a gentle introduction to role-playing. For veterans, it is a nostalgic touchstone and a source of endless reinterpretation.

Tips for Incorporating Hommlet into a Modern Campaign

If you are a DM looking to add the **Village of Hommlet** to your current game, consider these suggestions:

- Update the Plot: Change the cult from Elemental Evil to a threat that fits your setting, such as a necromantic cabal or a dragon cult.
- Deepen the NPCs: Give each villager a secret or a side quest. The baker might be a retired adventurer; the stable hand might be a polymorphed prince.
- Expand the Map: Add more buildings, such as a wizard's tower or a hidden shrine, to increase player agency.
- Use the Village as a Hub: Let the players return to Hommlet between adventures. Let them upgrade the fortifications, invest in businesses, and truly become part of the community.

Conclusion: The Heart of the Adventure

The **Village of Hommlet** is far more than a starting area. It is a living, breathing microcosm of the fantasy adventuring life. Its simplicity is its strength: a few buildings, a handful of memorable people, and the ever-present call of danger just beyond the gate. Whether you are a Dungeon Master designing your first campaign or a player seeking a classic experience, Hommlet offers a timeless foundation. Its legacy endures because it captures the essence of tabletop role-playing: a community of heroes rising from humble beginnings to face the unknown. Step into the Welcome Wench, listen to the rumors, and prepare your dice—the adventure is just beginning.

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