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VILLAGE BACKDROP:
FRAYWRACK





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VILLAGE BACKDROP: FRAYWRACK

When a flight of harpies, beset by a relentless demonic menace from beneath the dark seas, used their captivating song to lure a ship to its ruin, they sought allies instead of food. Thus, was born Fraywrack, originally a war camp created by the strange alliance of man and monster against a far greater threat. Now, hidden by the broken remains of their ship, the wreck's survivors and their recruits train endlessly for a fight they fear they have little hope of winning. Still, they persevere, welcoming adventurers who seek shelter in their cavern-home or who wish to learn some lessons of their own or, just maybe, lend their own might to the struggle.

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FRAYWRACK AT A GLANCE

Rulers: Captain Jorne Bitser and Shurasal

Population: 68 (30 humans, 4 dwarves, 10 half-elves, 6 half-orcs, 7 halflings, 11 harpies)

Alignments: N, CN, CE

Languages: Common

Resources & Industry: Maritime salvage, martial training

On a rocky headland known as Harpy's Head, the wreck of the *Sea Spite* hides a secret: a village where a strange alliance of men and monsters prepare for battle against Dagon, the demon lord of the sea, and his strange, deformed aquatic minions.

Originally a war camp comprising the surviving crew of the *Sea Spite* and the harpies that brought the ship to ruin, Fraywrack has grown over the scant years of its existence into a true village, albeit a small one. Recruits added to the original inhabitants, and nature took its course, the heady mix of near-certain death and close quarters forging relationships and dalliances that eventually brought new lives to the chill caves housing the village.

Life in Fraywrack is difficult and wearying, with work of some sort occupying almost all the denizens' waking hours. The primary focus is on training, with nearly a third of the camp engaged in martial practice at any time of the day in "the Battleground." Those not so occupied are responsible for other chores—keeping the camp supplied with food and other goods (which is a constant struggle). Scavenging parties rush out to seek shipwrecks, racing against time, monsters and even each other to find valuables to bring back to Fraywrack.

The search for additional warriors is almost as consuming. While some adventurers come to the village to enlist, more often recruits do not always arrive willingly, but find themselves drawn by the harpies' songs and persuaded to take up arms by their seeming rescuers.

Man and monster share a common purpose and live alongside each other, but few forget their differences. Resentment simmers between the groups that in almost any other circumstance would be enemies, and is kept in check only by force of will of leaders on both sides of the divide.



VILLAGE LORE

A character may know something about Fraywrack, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the characters are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- After their ship wrecked on Harpy's Head, the survivors of the *Sea Spite* founded a small community, Fraywrack, and now eke out a living along the coast.
- Fraywrack's reputation as a place not to be messed with is well deserved; the villagers spend most of their time training for battle, and none of them go anywhere unarmed.
- A flight of harpies called the area home before the *Sea Spite*'s wreck; for some reason they didn't just eat the survivors, and now humans and harpies all live together in Fraywrack.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: Residents of Fraywrack are strong, fit and almost gaunt. The harpies' (dirty) white wings have dark grey tips.

Dress: Fraywrack's residents wear rough clothing, often mismatched from what they can scrounge. All carry weapons.

Nomenclature: *male* Bosek, Helmar, Rozla; *female* Albun, Ritra; *family* Novidno, Telgria, Sovca; harpies Nirhul, Tesara, Voalda.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Fraywrack, a character may hear one or more rumours. The PC can learn this information in several ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local taverns and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the character learns.

1d6 RUMOUR

1*	The <i>Sea Spite</i> 's haunted, and don't you forget it! The cap'n's spirit wanders its decks at night, looking for a way out.
2	The Got and Give's mostly got junk, but the owner is holding out on a few magic trinkets she's hidden away.
3*	Those that don't make the cut in training are strung up from the <i>Sea Spite</i> 's mast and fed to the harpies.
4	Wulhem used to live in Coldwater, but fled in the middle of the night with just the clothes on his back.
5	The <i>Sea Spite</i> wasn't the first ship lured to this lonely stretch of rocky shore, by the harpies, but its crew are the first to not subsequently be eaten.
6*	Mark my words, the priest Skettri Howsell is consorting with one of them harpies, and not in no priestly way neither.

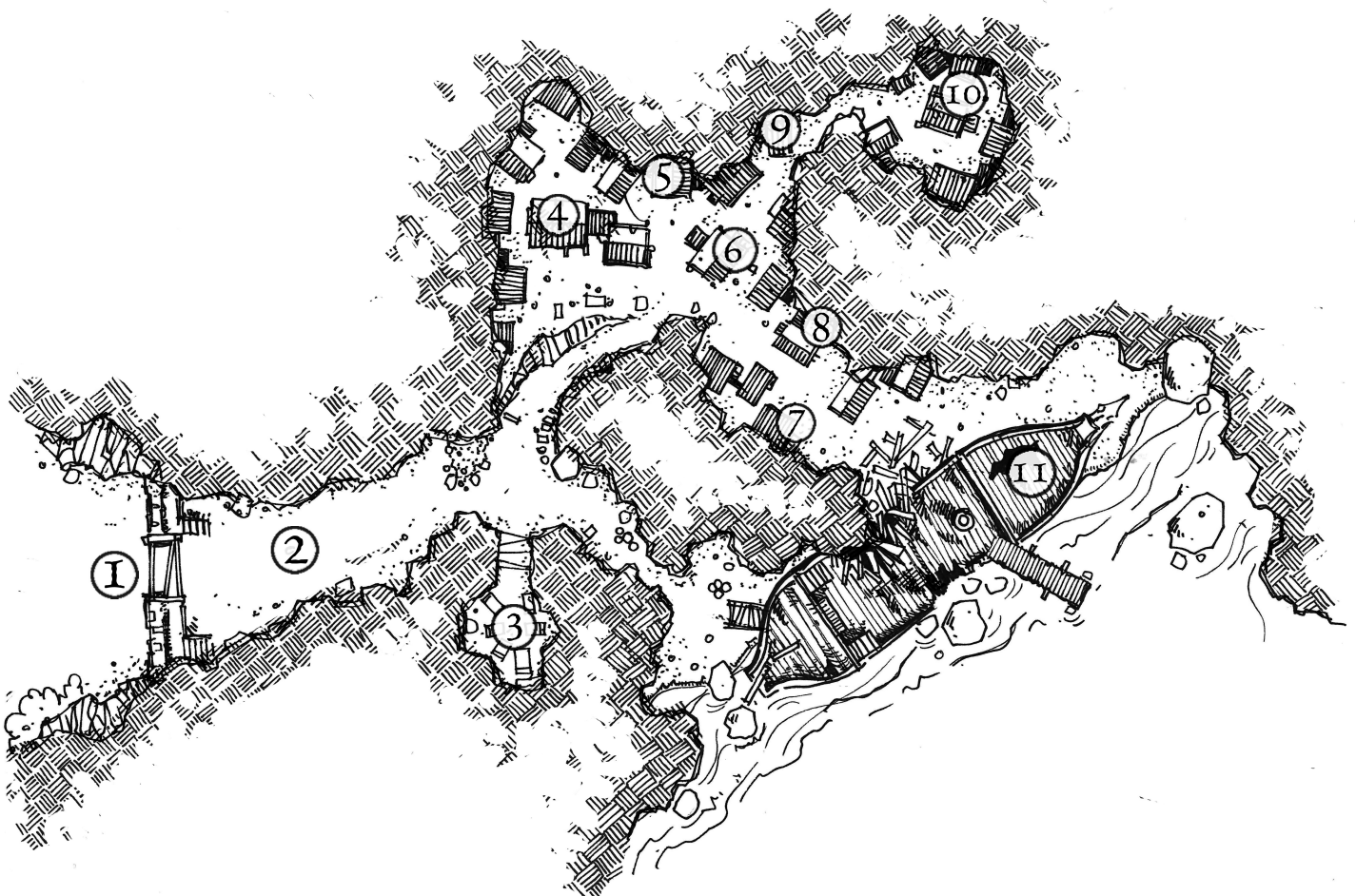
* False rumour.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of Fraywrack comprises ramshackle wooden shacks crafted from timber salvaged from various shipwrecks. They are of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

1. **Gates:** Heavy gates made from shattered masts ward Fraywrack's main entrance. Guards always watch the approaches, from atop the palisade.
2. **Battleground:** Sheltered from the waves, blood stains the cold rock floor in this area, where villagers drill almost constantly. In the event of unwelcome visitors, the Battleground can live up to its name as a brutal killing field.
3. **The Nest:** The rank odour of the harpies' living quarters nearly overpowers the smell of the sea. Few non-harpies willingly visit this location.
4. **Captain's Quarters:** Jorne Bitser, the *Sea Spite's* first mate claimed the mantle of captain after the wreck. He lives here in Fraywrack's largest home. His first mate—Telina Erevrad—also dwells here.
5. **The Carpenter's Shop:** Slightly less ramshackle than most of Fraywrack's other buildings, weapons and other goods are produced here for the camp by One-Hit Lukil.

6. **Quartermaster's:** From this central location, Quartermaster Boloi Hammerstone doles out food and supplies to any villager who needs them. Boloi hates Herstil (location 8).
7. **Any Port:** The relatively new tavern, dubbed this as a shortened form of "any port in a storm," offers a few rooms to Fraywrack's rare visitors.
8. **The Got and Give:** Herstil Toriklif, having given up on fighting after suffering a bad wound, runs a scavenging and bartering business, selling goods the quartermaster won't or can't provide.
9. **Wulhem's Home:** Jaska Vuolle, the man known as Wulhem Senis, lives here in secrecy after fleeing for unknown reasons from the nearby village of Coldwater.
10. **Chapel:** This sturdy structure in a sheltered cavern is dedicated to Serat (the uncaring Mistress of Storms). The cavern also has shrines dedicated to several other deities, although these are rarely used.
11. **The Sea Spite:** Long ago picked clean of any remaining value, the *Sea Spite's* wreck is nearly a sacred space to the crew's survivors. Fish feature heavily in Fraywrack's denizens' diet, and humans with nets and rods are a common sight here



LIFE IN FRAYWRACK

Life in Fraywrack is not like that in most villages; it's a hard, nearly joyless place. There are few children, and not many expect the village to outlive them. Indeed, most villagers hope they will somehow outlive the village and move to happier locales. When not scavenging and scrounging for the basic necessities to keep them alive, villagers spend their time training, honing their skills for the inevitable confrontation with Dagon's aquatic minions.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Little trade exists in Fraywrack, which normally keeps its gates closed. Even when a merchant arrives, the villagers have little to offer. Indeed, their economy relies far more on scavenging—picking over the bones of hapless ships and other such opportunities. What little industry exists revolves around making weapons and training soldiers, as well as subsistence fishing.

LAW & ORDER

Sharusal and Captain Jorne Bitser keep order in Fraywrack, keeping their harpy, human and other followers from each other's throats and focused on their mission.

In truth, there is little organised law in Fraywrack, mostly because there is little need: there's almost nothing worth stealing. What disputes do arise are resolved on the Battleground, though intentionally causing serious injury to your opponent is frowned on and mostly avoided.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

Unlike many villages, becoming a citizen of Fraywrack is not so simple; indeed, newcomers who wish to stay and gain the full benefits of residency, such as they are (mostly the ability to draw on supplies from the Quartermaster's), must pass the Trial. This series of challenges includes a swim around Harpy's Head, the ability to resist a harpy's song and proof of martial skill by besting several villagers either in succession or all at once. Those who pass are taught a basic sign language, so they can communicate if they have wax in their ears so they don't succumb to harpy song.

In addition, every year the sailors from the *Sea Spite* mark the day of the wreck to honour their dead, and ostensibly renew their alliance with the harpies. While it's meant to be a celebration, and is typically observed as such by newer residents, lingering hard feelings between sailors and harpies tend to give the festivities an odd, resentful undertone.



VILLAGE DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the characters experience as they explore Fraywrack.

1D20 DRESSING/EVENT

1	A nearby shipwreck sends both harpy and human scavengers racing to find prey and salvage, respectively.
2	The anniversary of the <i>Sea Spite's</i> wreck spurs a raucous wake; barrels of rotgut are opened!
3	A deformed villager from Coldwater arrives at Fraywrack's gates, prompting a frantic call to arms.
4	A training accident leaves a raw recruit badly injured and at severe risk of dying of her wounds.
5	A severe storm at high tide floods the cavern; half a foot of water and muck cover the ground.
6	A drunken sailor loudly proclaims he saw something moving the previous night aboard the <i>Sea Spite</i> .
7	A male dwarf (Boloi Hammerstone) and human woman leaning on a solid cane (Herstil Toriklif) scream at each other, flecks of spittle flying in their red-faced rage.
8	A young harpy—somewhat less filthy than the rest of her clan—stares intently at a candle in the chapel, watching it slowly burn down.
9	A large crab-like creature scuttles up to Fraywrack's gate as guards throw spears that bounce off its carapace.
10	A gull snatches a fish off a line as an angry sailor screams curses at it.
11	A halfling wanders through the camp toward the Nest, as if dazed, but there's no audible harpy song.
12	A night-time lightning strike illuminates the bulk of the <i>Sea Spite</i> .
13	Laundry flaps in the breeze on a line strung between two homes.
14	Villagers stop what they're doing and gather on the Battleground to watch two fighters spar.
15	A harpy calls out about a passing ship that could be lured to the village.
16	A harpy and human engage in a tug of war over a large eel steak; neither willing releases the prize.
17	A female half-orc hums to herself as she sits in front of her home, sharpening a vicious point onto a spear.
18	A half-orc woman and human man carry on a conversation in sign language, never once bothering to open their mouths even as their gestures grow heated.
19	A bald dwarf sings off-key, the wax in his ears meaning he's not subjected to his own off-pitch, discordant attempts to carry a tune.
20	The beautiful song of a harpy rises through the caves, made all the more captivating by the cave's echoes.

THE SURROUNDING LOCALITY

The spit of rock that houses Fraywrack claimed ships long before the first harpies arrived. The pounding surf sent merchants and smugglers alike careening into the unforgiving rocks, dooming vessels and crew to watery graves. Though some few sailors made it safely onto the promontory, they then faced a perilous trip to the nearest civilisation, the dismal village of Coldwater.

The harpies made it even more dangerous, calling passers-by to a cruel fate, and earning the place the moniker Harpy's Head. Several efforts of shipping consortiums and others to hire adventurers to dispose of them met with dismal failure. The dark waves pounding the promontory hide many other dangers, not just the hidden rocks below the surface that threaten ships venturing too close to shore, especially on storm-lashed nights. Various sea creatures, from vicious crustaceans to ravenous sharks, would be happy to make a meal of any unfortunates that end up in the water. Most dangerous are the huge eels dwelling nearby, each big enough to feed a ship's crew for a week...or to feed on the contents of a ship in a matter of moments.

The barren land of Harpy's Head is safer, though not by much. Though few are as large as the one housing Fraywrack, caves dot the coast, and they too provide shelter for creatures large and small. The less intelligent creatures at times find themselves venturing into the village, attracted by the light and noise of the villagers. More intelligent creatures have learned there's no easy prey in Fraywrack itself, but those travelling to or from the village, or venturing forth on a scavenging mission, are much easier prey.

But the biggest threat remains the one that led to Fraywrack's founding: the dark taint spawned by the influence of Dagon, the Shadow in the Sea. Deformed creatures and foul amphibious humanoids, many with ill intentions, abound in the immediate vicinity. Worse, villagers fear, the taint itself could spread, and they are constantly alert for any signs of its presence.



IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Fraywrack can fit almost any coastal location. It's designed as a companion to *Village Backdrop: Coldwater*, but can easily stand on its own. It serves as a place characters might go to receive martial training, or as a sanctuary in which they can rest and recuperate between adventures in the surrounding wilderness.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: GATES

A wooden palisade wards Fraywrack's only landward entrance, uneven timbers forming rough crenelations along the parapet. The heavy wooden gate is typically closed. Wooden platforms enable guards to see over the barrier and give them clean fields of fire into the area beyond. Typically only one person (male or female human fighter 1) is stationed here. If Fraywrack is on alert, three guards keep watch from each walkway.

A rope hawser secures the gate, but its weight proves the major impediment to entry or exit. Opening it is no easy task and typically, three or four guards handle the task as needed.

2: BATTLEGROUND

What little mud and debris cover this area of the cave complex have been pushed to the sides by the sweep of many feet. The Battleground serves as the primary training area for Fraywrack. Here, villagers drill for hours in preparation for battle against savage fishmen from the sea, their demonic patron and his deformed followers on shore.

Though no actual battle has taken place here, Veigga Tavlidalr (N female halfling fighter 2/thief 4) prefers that description to "the Training Grounds", or any similar name, to emphasise the seriousness of her lessons. The gaunt halfling, her hair shorn almost to the skull, pushes her charges hard: accidents, sometimes fatal ones, are not unheard of; they are simply incorporated into the lessons. One of the first additions to Fraywrack who wasn't a survivor of the *Sea Spite's* wreck, Veigga scoffs at some of the village's nautical traditions, often pointing

out that surviving a battle (which she claims she's done numerous times) is more than a matter of luck unlike "holding on for dear life as a boat hits something." Despite this, her skill and experience helped her rise to prominence among the villagers.

3: THE NEST

Fraywrack's harpies previously considered the entire cave complex their home, but retreated to this cavern after the *Sea Spite's* wreck, and the arrival of their new "allies". The sickly sweet and sour odour of rancid flesh and perfumed oils here is nearly overwhelming, overpowering the ocean's briny smell. Few human villagers visit the Nest.

The flight stands out from others of their kind: the underside of their long wings are white, though often stained with dirt and filth, while the dark grey feathers on the back of their wings deepen to black at the tips. Like other harpies, they wear trinkets from their victims, though much of this group's baubles are tarnished and tattered with age.

Not all the harpies are pleased with their situation. A small faction led by Shurasal's daughter, Andumil (CE female harpy), dislikes being forced to "play with their food." They believe they could defeat the fishmen on their own or find a new place to live.

Andumil often sulks in the nest. At times, however, she lurks outside near the training ground. When she thinks she can get away with it, she uses a momentary snatch of her captivating song, hoping to cause a distraction and fatal injury among the warriors training in the Battleground. So far, she has managed to get anyone killed, and her surreptitious singing continues.

ANDUMIL

CE female harpy

The contemptuous sneer on her face and stains that look like dried blood on her white feathers give this harpy an unwelcoming mien.

Mannerisms: If she must deal with non-harpies, Andumil disagrees with them solely to disagree, even to the point of arguing against her own best interests. In the rare instances someone wants her actual opinion, longtime residents learned, its best to present her with two diametric choices so she can pick a side while still having something to oppose.

Personality: A spiteful, conniving coward, Andumil subtly tries to undermine her mother and the Fraywrack alliance. She would rather flee Harpy's Head and establish the flight somewhere else than face the threat from the sea, but is too scared of her mother to try to claim leadership... for now.

Background: Andumil is Sharusal's surviving daughter (she quietly dispatched her two sisters long ago), and the presumed next leader of the Harpy's Head flight. She opposed the alliance with humans but was brutally overruled by her mother.

CAPTAIN JORNE BITSER

N male human fighter 5

This burly man's weather-worn face is largely hidden by a rough blond beard.

Mannerisms: Bitser chews on his cheek—often to the point it's bleeding, which he disgustingly then spits out—when he's unsure of himself.

Personality: Bitser is the perfect second in command, trained to carry out everyday routines and implement his superior's orders, but is far from the most imaginative man in the world. He dithers badly whenever forced into an unfamiliar situation, which happens often in Fraywrack. He seeks input from numerous people before making any big decisions, looking for any way to avoid choosing incorrectly.

Background: Rising through the ranks, Bitser long served as second in command on the *Sea Spite*, the perfect position for him. When the captain died in the ship's wreck, Bitser naturally took command. His uncharacteristically quick, decisive action in dealing with Sharusal saved the remaining crew, but left Bitser in unfamiliar waters in the aftermath.

4: CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

This home, like all the early buildings in Fraywrack, was hastily built, from flotsam and the *Sea Spite's* guts. Unlike most of the other shacks, the interior belies expectations, with many rich ornamentations taken from the wreck, including the ship's wheel, with its silver-inlaid spokes and bolts carved to look like jagged shark's teeth.

Captain Jorne Bitser (N male human fighter 5), lives here with his first mate Telina Erevrad (N female half-elf ranger 2). Jorne oversees the camp, running it much as he would a ship, but has little tactical acumen, leading him to be incredibly cautious in planning any action outside the camp. Much to the harpies' irritation (and some of his own villagers'), he must be pushed to commit to any sort of aggressive action. Jorne argues the villagers need more training. In truth, he has no idea how to plan a military campaign and dreads making a terrible mistake.

5: THE CARPENTER'S SHOP

The *Sea Spite's* carpenter, One-Hit Lukil (N female half-orc), works from this wooden building, which looks marginally sturdier than most of Fraywrack's other structures. Once responsible for most of the camp's infrastructure, One-Hit Lukil—named for how many hammer blows it takes her to drive a nail through a board—now focuses on arming villagers, though she's no great talent at it. She can craft most simple weapons, other than crossbows, but anything more complex takes about one and a half times as long as normal, and has a small chance (10%) of breaking when used.

SHARUSAL

CN female harpy

A foul smell of rotting fish exudes from this gold and silver chain-bedecked harpy whose grey wings end in black tips.

Mannerisms: Sharusal is brusque, well beyond the point of rudeness, with both harpies and non-harpies. She expects things to happen as she wants, and verbally vents her fury when she meets resistance.

Personality: Sharusal is the harpies' leader and rules with an iron talon. She seems cruel—and can in fact be so—but cares for her fellow harpies and sees herself as a protective mother. If she has to punish them (or anyone else in Fraywrack), it's for their own good and, just as importantly, is their own fault.

Background: Sharusal once led a much larger clan of harpies, inheriting it from her mother. She came up with the plan to find allies as she realised the threat posed by the strangeness in Devil's Cove and its surrounds. In truth, she dislikes the alliance almost as much as her daughter does, but sublimates her hunger for the clan's greater good. Should the greater threat ever be eliminated, though, she may well see an end to the need for any such peaceful cooperation.

6: QUARTERMASTER'S

This building houses the village's quartermaster, Boloi Hammerstone (NG male dwarf thief 1). Though dedicated and experienced, Boloi is largely overwhelmed by his duties. They are far more than he had to handle on the ship, especially due to the lack of most of the supplies needed to keep the village running. The perpetually haggard dwarf responds gruffly to any requests, running his hands through his thinning hair and tugging frequently on his salt-and-pepper beard. He loathes The Got and Give and its proprietor, seeing them as an insult to his abilities to provide for his fellows.

7: ANY PORT

A roaring blaze in a niche in the cavern wall comprising the back of this tavern does little to displace the cold and dampness in its farther reaches. Luckily, the rotgut for sale chases any lingering chills away. Originally just Fasti Averton's home, which he opened to friends to unwind after long hours training, it soon became the villagers' proverbial "any port in a storm," from which its name derives. It serves cheap, homemade alcohol, but occasionally has better fare brought in by scavengers. As Fraywrack grew from war camp to village and began actually attracting the occasional trader, Fasti (CN male human) set up several cots in a curtained-off area that is the closest thing to an inn in the village.

- **Food & Drink:** Rotgut (1 cup) 1 sp or barter; 10% chance wine (bottle) 10 gp.
- **Accommodation:** Cots in common room (only five available) 5 sp or barter, floor 1 sp or barter.

OLOLVAYA

CN female harpy

This harpy seems marginally cleaner than others in the nest, and the perfume she's wearing isn't quite as cloying. A wooden symbol of a cresting wave hangs around her neck.

Mannerisms: Ololvaya plays with the holy symbol of Serat she wears, rubbing it and even gently chewing on it, though not if she's aware of anyone watching her.

Personality: Ololvaya is the most approachable of Fraywrack's harpies, especially by those wearing signs of religious devotion. (Religious devotion fascinates her). Bullied by the other harpies, she lashes out at any non-harpy who treats her harshly, but responds well to kindness.

Background: Ololvaya is Fraywrack's youngest harpy. Tired of being picked on in the smaller cave the clan retreated to, she sought out a less-used space, settling on the chapel. There she struck up a strange friendship with Skettri. She seeks to draw magic from the holy symbol he gifted her but hasn't the faith to draw the Mistress of Storms' attention, despite Skettri's attempts to instruct her Serat's ways.

8: THE GOT AND GIVE

This ramshackle building holds The Got and Give, Fraywrack's only shop. Proprietor Herstil Toriklif (N female human fighter 3) arrived as a recruit but a training accident left her lame. After trading her good armour and blade for the home that now houses the Got and Give trading post, she realised she had the makings of a business. Herstil organises salvage parties to bring in goods that aren't otherwise available, trading "luxuries" such as nicer clothes, superior weapons and armour, and better food, for other items. Herstil continues to hold on to three magic items she acquired over the years, waiting for a trade worth her while. The items are:

- **Magic Items:** *Gauntlets of ogre power* (15,000 gp), *cloak of the manta ray* (12,500 gp), *rope of climbing* (10,000 gp).

Though she buys and sells items, Herstil has little need for coins. She offers far better value for barter. (She buys items for half their listed price, and sells items with a 25% mark up. However, she's far more generous with barter, taking items for 75% of their value with no mark up on the items she gives in return.)

9: WULHEM'S HOME

This small house is home to Wulhem Senis (N old male human fighter 4/wizard 3) and his many secrets. Wulhem is in fact Jaska Vuolle, the rightful ruler of the nearby village of Coldwater, which is a dismal, sullen haven for smugglers and other miscreants.

Jaska fled, abandoning his wife and village, nine years ago in the middle of the night, after seeing something horrifying emerge from the waters of Devil's Cove. The encounter was so frightening it turned his black hair completely white. Such was his terror, he even left behind his family's prized relic, in his panic. After spending years on the road, he heard of Fraywrack and made his

way to the village, hoping to use its inhabitants to cleanse and reclaim his home. He pushes Captain Jorne Bitser to take more aggressive action, hinting Coldwater is the source of all their ills. He's not above lying to adventurers about a great treasure in Devil's Cove. He knows if he returns to Coldwater as a heroic saviour, reclaiming his title will be that much easier, and hopes to use proxies to achieve his goal.

10: CHAPEL

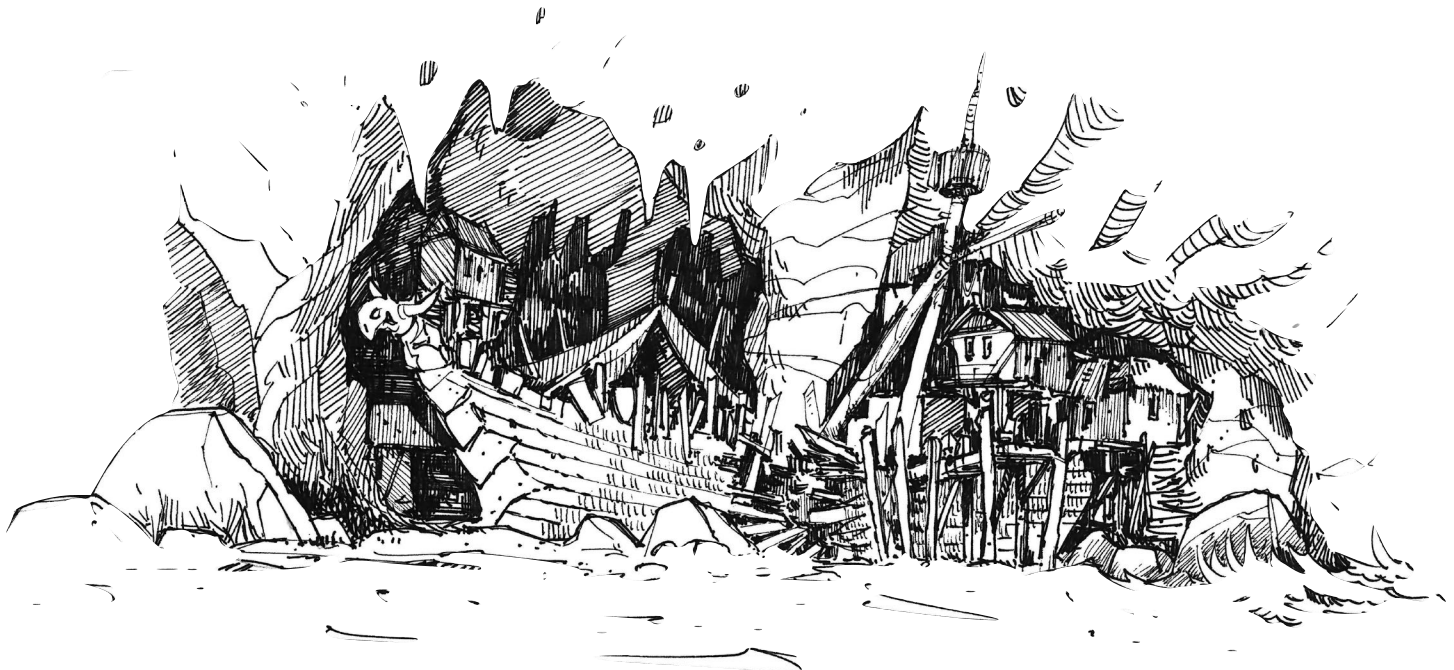
Built in a sheltered section of the cavern complex, Fraywrack's chapel provides for the human villagers' spiritual needs. It's run by Skettri Howsell (CN male half-orc cleric [Serat] 3), who was pulled from the ocean several months after the *Sea Spite's* wreck. The tragedy—Skettri was the only known survivor after leaping overboard when his ship was attacked by creatures from the deep—left him traumatised. He's terrified of the water, though equally determined to wreak his vengeance on the attackers.

Among those visiting the chapel are the young harpy Ololvaya (CN female harpy), who appears fascinated with Skettri and his teachings. She can often be found here, to the irritation of many of the villagers (who find her odour objectionable).

11: THE SEA SPITE

The once-proud ship lies broken on the rocks in front of the cavern complex's opening to the sea. A long dock, which residents fish from or use to moor the few rowboats from a nearby ship, juts into the water from the shattered bulk. Inside, much of the ship has been stripped of valuables, taken for Captain Jorne Bitser's home or to trade for needed supplies. Even the bones of the ship have not gone unused, pillaged to erect the shelters that keep Fraywrack's residents dry and warm.

Shurasal (CN female harpy), the leader of the harpy flight, often rests here, away from both her fellow monsters and her uneasy allies.



OGL V1.0A

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