

080-2020

THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE ICE

Operations manual for isolated arctic horror roleplaying Written by Micah Anderson and illustrated by Amanda Franck Edited by Jared Sinclair, with additional writing by Nickolas Masyk

WSCAJ-0085

WHAT IS THIS GAME?

This is a game of horror and slow-creeping hopelessness. You and your friends play a group of hapless corporate or academic grunts who uncover something terrible and are subsequently hunted by a creature roused by your actions.

Nominate someone to play as the Supervisor. The Supervisor describes the situations the other characters live in and controls the movements of the Monster that hunts the others. The player characters react to the world the Supervisor describes, then the Supervisor creates new scenarios, and so on.

HOW DO YOU PLAY?

Whenever you want to do something that has a significant chance of failure, and where failure would be interesting, roll two sixsided dice (2d6) and add or subtract any relevant modifiers. If the sum of that roll is higher than 8, the action is a success. If the sum is lower, the action is a failure. Either way, the Supervisor narrates the consequences and play continues.

ADVANTAGE & DISADVANTAGE

When you have a situational edge to complete a task, you may roll with Advantage. This means that you roll 3d6 and take the two best results. Disadvantage is the opposite roll 3d6 and take the two worst.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY:

- Supervisor: So you want to try to open the door without the thing in the common room hearing you?
- Russel: Yeah.
- Supervisor: It's locked. That'll be a **Hands** check to pick it quietly.
- Russel (rolls 2d6 showing 4 and 5, and adds 1 from his **Head** stat): Nice! A 10.
- Supervisor: The lock clicks and the door softly swings open.
- Kurt: I want to try to dash across to the doorway Russel is in.
- Supervisor: Cool, that's a **Feet** check.
- Kurt (rolls an 8 and subtracts 1 from his Feet stat, for a total of 7): Shit, just missed it.
- Supervisor: You dart across, but your boot squeaks on the wet linoleum as you do. The creature wearing Boone's body shrieks and begins running in your direction!

HOW DO I MAKE A CHARACTER?

To start with, choose a name and a role. Most characters should be everymen, regular people shoved into strange circumstances.

You interact with the world through four stats:

HEAD is your mental acuity and willpower. **HANDS** is your strength and fighting ability. **BODY** is your stamina and endurance. **FEET** is your speed and stealthiness.

Assign each of the values +2, +1, 0, and -1 to your stats in any combination you wish.

Next, determine your starting HP as described in your chosen role, and your Luck by rolling 1d6+6. You have inventory slots equal to your Body+10. If you exceed them, you are encumbered and can't run or fight.

Finally, write down any distinguishing features your character has, their vices and virtues, and one connection they have to the outside world.

WHAT ARE THE ROLES?

Roles allow your character to do things the others can't, and determines the amount of Hit Points you have at the beginning of the game.

ENGINEERS start with 1d3+3 HP and can jury-rig most things back into workable condition for a short time. As long as your head fits, you can squeeze into almost any tight space.

MERCENARIES start with 1d6+2 HP and can ignore any Injury by spending a point of Luck. Improvised weapons do normal damage in your hands.

SCIENTISTS start with 1d6 HP. Once per session, on a successful **Head** check, a Scientist can ask the Supervisor a question, which they must answer truthfully and clearly.

DOCTORS start with 2d3 HP. Once per session, on a successful **Head** check, a Doctor can stabilize a dying teammate that they have access to, removing 1d6 Injuries.



WHAT IF THERE'S FIGHTING?

There will probably be fighting. You'll need to fight for your life, after all. When fighting breaks out, whether with the Monster, voracious wildlife, or even your fellow survivors, everyone rolls for initiative by making a **Head** check. For fights against NPCs (non-player characters), anyone who passes the **Head** check goes before the opponents and anyone who fails goes after.

If players are fighting each other, initiative goes from highest to lowest roll.

An ambush renders initiative unnecessary the side initiating the ambush gets a free round of combat before the opposing side can react.

Most Monsters, animals, and people aren't dedicated to fighting to the death. If it seems like they are losing, or the firepower against them is too deadly, an NPC will run away or hide.

HOW DOES DAMAGE WORK?

To hit something, roll 3d6, trying to get over the Target Number. Apply any amount in excess of the TN as damage. Add your **Hand** score to melee attack rolls and your **Feet** to ranged attacks.

Anyone attacking with an improvised or light weapon subtracts 2 from their damage. Heavy weapons add 2 to the damage and require two hands.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY:

- Russel won initiative against the amalgamated remains of his comrades and is about to try to charbroil the Monster with a flamethrower.
- Russel (rolls 3d6 for 4, 3, and 6, adding +2 from his **Feet** stat and +2 because the flamethrower is a heavy weapon): 17!
- Supervisor (sees that the Monster's TN is 9): 8 damage. It whistles in pain and rage.
- Supervisor (rolls 3d6+6 for a total of 10 to hit Russel): It swings out with a tendril, hitting you for two damage.

Russel: Oof, I'm out of HP now.

- Supervisor: Check your injuries?
- Russel (rolls a 6 over 2): Still alive, for now.

A "TARGET NUMBER"?

Armor class, except most modern exploration parties rarely have plate-maille available to them. Unarmored, base Target Numbers are always 8, just like ability checks.

Light protection (like that of a puffy snowsuit) increases your base TN by 2. Additional protection, scavenged pots and pans, bulletproof vests, faceshields, and even cover give +1 to your TN, up to a maximum of 15. Be wary of over-encumbering yourself with armor, though—running and sneaking becomes impossible under all that weight.

HOW DO YOU DIE?

Your HP represents your stamina and agility, your ability to not get hit and avoid damage. When your Hit Points are reduced to 0, you begin taking Injuries.

When you have 0 HP and would take damage, you receive an Injury. When you take an Injury, roll 2d6, attempting to roll higher than your new number of Injuries. If you roll under your Injuries, you die.

HOW DO YOU HEAL?

A quick breather restores all HP.

Each Injury takes at least a week to heal, and may have lingering effects. Medicine and proper treatment may reduce those times significantly or even heal an Injury outright.

WHAT IS "LUCK"?

If something catastrophic happens, the Supervisor might allow you to make a Luck save to avoid the worst of the effects. To do so, roll 2d6 under your current Luck. Whether or not you succeed, reduce your Luck by one.

You can also choose to spend a point and make a Luck save to gain Advantage on your next roll, do +1 damage, or have something go your way in the game, like coaxing a few more miles from a nearly-empty snow-mobile gas tank.

Luck doesn't naturally replenish, although there are ways to increase it.

HOW CAN I GET MORE LUCK?

By writing an Apocalypse Log. After every session, each character who wants to can write an in-universe, diegetic description of what happened or a letter to loved ones in order to gain 1d3 Luck for the next session.

IS THERE UPWARD MOBILITY?

Advancement is a bit unfounded in a game like this, generally used for one-shots and short, episodic campaigns. Characters tend to accumulate knowledge and things instead of levels, and usually end up losing health and stability as events occur rather than gaining them. But maybe the characters manage to escape and make it home, damaged and paranoid, only to be dragged back because of their expertise on the strange and horrifying.

For the ambitious Supervisor who wants to stretch things out, here are some advancement rules. Every time a character survives something truly terrible, they can roll 1d6 and gain that much more maximum HP, and half that much more Luck.

GEAR IN THE COLD

Before the game, the Supervisor determines how big an expedition is, and what gear it comes equipped with.

Players can also bring stuff with them, whether supplied by Management or by your own wallet. Remember; the chances of getting relief are slim to none, so the equipment you choose (and are able to scavenge) will be all you have.

MICAH ANDERSON

GEAR	DESCRIPTION	OTHER
Ice Axe	Light weapon, adv. on climbing checks.	1 slot
Flare Gun	Light weapon, target takes additional 1d3 damage while flare is imbedded.	1 slot
Hand Gun	Regular weapon. Revolver (6 shots) or pistol (9 shots).	1 slot
Long Gun	Heavy weapon. Rifle or shotgun.	2 slots
Flame Thrower	Heavy weapon. Ignited target takes 1d6 additional damage until fire is put out.	2 slots
Propellant	Ammo for flamethrower. Sustained fire for 1 minute.	1 slot
Hand Gun Ammo	Box of 50 rounds for Hand Guns.	1 slot
Long Gun Ammo	Box of 20 rounds for Long Guns.	1 slot
Rations	Cans, freeze-dried and fresh produce. Enough for 1 person for a week.	3 slots
Fresh Water	Barrel. Enough for 1 person for a week.	5 slots
Painkillers	Prescription-strength. Ignore an Injury.	1/2 slot
Gauze	Medical bandages.	½ slot
Alcohol	Medical-grade. Unsafe for consumption.	1 slot
Personal Computer	Note-documents, relevant software, personal media, no internet connection.	1 slot
Smartphone	No internet connection, relevant software.	1/2 slot
Walkie-Talkie	2 in a pack. Short-range transmission.	1 slot
Inside Clothes	Suitable for sleep and recreation.	N/A
Snowsuit	Includes overalls, parka, gloves, goggles, miscellaneous items of warm clothing.	2 slots
Backpack	Gain an additional 3 inventory slots while wearing.	1 slot

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Roll d66 (two six-sided dice, read straight across) however many times you want to randomly determine your unique features.

- 11. Heavy scarring.
- 12. Whispery voice.
- 13. Extremely pale.
- 14. Very dark.
- 15. Squished face.
- 16. Clumsy.
- 21. Full lips.
- 22. Large ears.
- 23. Ruddy complexion.
- 24. Thinning hair.
- 25. Talks with hands.
- 26. Walks with a limp.
- 31. Talks to themselves.
- 32. Thin lips.
- 33. Long nose.
- 34. Sniffles.
- 35. Clears throat.
- 36. Tall.

- 41. Squat.
- 42. Hirsute.
- 43. Gruff voice.
- 44. No volume control.
- 45. Functional alcoholic.
- 46. Thick hair.
- 51. Stutters.
- 52. Intricate tattoos.
- 53. Lisp.
- 54. Pockmarks.
- 55. Unusual piercings.
- 56. Short.
- 61. Big feet.
- 62. Watery eyes.
- 63. Glasses.
- 64. Hums absently.
- 65. Cracks knuckles.
- 66. Tanned.

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SUPERVISOR'S OPERATIONS MANUAL

For Game-Master's eyes only

WSCAJ-0084

THE MONSTER

Every horror story needs a good Monster. Something otherworldly, unknown and unknowable. Something unseen but everpresent. Once the players become aware of it, they see it's sign in every corner or bit of shadow, but rarely see the Monster itself. Like the shark in Jaws, it should surface, devastate the characters, then sink again, out of sight.

Allow the players to make their own assumptions about it. The fear of the unknown is the greatest fear we have.

Monsters are not (usually) dumb beasts; they wait, and plan, and scheme to further their ends. They will destroy food, ruin shelters, prevent communication to isolate the characters before mutilating them.

Monsters are almost always unleashed by human interference—the harsh arctic or antarctic wastes are places where humanity was not meant to tread, and that trespassing caused the horror.

Generally, Monsters are resistant to harm, whether through supernatural immortality, alien resilience, or sheer redundancy of parts. A statblock for a Monster might look like this:

Wehluac, Devourer From the Stars 36 (3), TN 9 +2/+4/+1

Mostly invisible. Tentacles drain blood from living beings, restore 1d6 HP to Wehluac.

A breakdown: 36 (3) is the number of HP the monster has, while the number in parentheses is how many times it needs to be brought to 0 HP (at which point it slinks away into the darkness). So Wehluac, Devourer From the Stars is pretty resilient, and has three encounters built in.

The Target Number required to hit the Monster is listed as *TN* 9, which shows that though it has a lot of health, it doesn't have much armor or is pretty slow. It's easy to hit, hard to kill.

+2/+4/+4/+1 are a simplified view of the Monster's stats. They're the same as for the player characters: **Head**, **Hands**, **Body**, and **Feet**, in that order. So according to that, the Devourer is as cunning as, nearly twice as strong and resilient as, and about as fast as the average human.

THE METHODS

What the Monster does to those it catches. Does it devour them? If so, does it devour them whole, or does it leave a mess of viscera behind? Does it transmute them, turning their tissue transparent and jellylike? Does it drain them of fluids, or trap them in an imperfect time-loop? Does it drive them mad, or use them as an incubator, or ritualistically mutilate them?

This should be one of the first things you think about. It's the most common spoor of the Monster, the most telling of its nature, and the most terrifying aspect: knowing that you could be next.

That doesn't mean you should plan everything out, although you can. You don't need to have a reason why it does these things, because the players might not find that information at all. Leaving out an explanation makes the Monster more alien and terrifying.

GENERATING A MONSTER

d6	ADJECTIVE (2x)	SIZ	ZE
1	Luminous	Varia	able
2	Gibbous	Microscopi	c (Swarm)
3	Tentacled	Child-	Sized
4	Mutilated	Man-S	Sized
5	Blurry	Bear-S	Sized
6	Light-Displacing	Building	g-Sized
2d6	FORM	METHOD	(up to 3x)
2	Dancing Lights	Creates Imperf	ect Time-Loops
3	Mist-Like	Ritualisticall	y Mutilates
4	Insectoid	Mimics	Voices
5	Root-Like	Mimics	Form
6	Humanoid	Drinks Vi	tal Fluid
7	Molluscoid	Dissolve	es Prey
8	Fungoid	Devour	rs Prey
9	Reptilian	Extracts Meta	l from Bodies
10	Mass of Smaller Things	Teleki	netic
11	Geometric	Short-Range 1	Feleportation
12	Roll Twice, Combine	Invades	Dreams
d6	WE	AKNESS	
1	Strong Acid	4 F	ire
2	Electricity	5 Hallud	cinogens
3	Fire	6 Convention	al Weaponry

PLAYING A MONSTER

When not actively harming or otherwise doing its Method, the Monster is creeping around, blending in, planning, or off somewhere else.

Roll on the table below to determine what it's doing if a character finds it before it attacks.

2d6	WHAT IS IT DOING?
2	Gibbering in an alien tongue.
3	Staring vacantly.
4	Lurking in the shadows.
5	Lurching towards you.
6	Shrieking from its mouth(s).
7	Skittering across the ceiling.
8	Moaning and shuffling.
9	Slithering across the floor.
10	Laughing and weeping.
11	Spasming and shuddering.
12	Howling unnervingly.

THE SECRET

Make sure your players are comfortable with the possibility of treachery and PVP before just springing it on them. If they are, you can add a Secret to your scenario.

For a bit of extra conspiracy-thriller mood setting, Supervisors can add intimations that Management knew something about the horrors here, and kept that information from the characters. It might be something as unassuming as "the satellite imaging from 0701 to 0830 was too blurry to see anything, even discounting unpredictable weather patterns" to something as dreadful as "Management knew about the people frozen in the ice; they sent us here as bait." Hints may be scattered around from previous expeditions, parts of maps erased or blacked out, strange equipment stocked that has no bearing on the purported purpose of the outpost, or some of the characters might actually know bits and pieces firsthand.

If a character does know something about the Secret, they should keep it quiet until the situation becomes untenable.

WHAT MANAGEMENT KNEW

Roll d36 (a d3 and d6, read straight across) to help generate a Secret. If you want an even more complex conspiracy, roll a few times and add them all.

- 11. A scrap of burnt paper in the boiler says to "make this all look like an accident."
- 12. The gun locker is filled with military hardware and only the supervisor has the key.
- 13. The staff at the facility is relieved every 2 months, on the dot.
- 14. Something is putting a lot of strain on the facility's power grid.
- 15. Management business partners include major pharmaceuticals and bioweapons divisions.
- 16. One of the **Engineers** knows about the tunnels under the research station.
- 21. Correspondence is now being censored.
- 22. Another research facility is only 50km away, but has been declared off-limits.
- 23. Staff psych evaluations are forwarded directly to Management.

- 24. There are no security cameras in the biology lab.
- 25. There are orders not to get "too attached" to the dogs in the kennel.
- 26. Mercenaries are instructed to save their last bullet for themselves.
- 31. There aren't enough supplies to cover the length of your contracts.
- 32. A suit from Management (and their four military bodyguards) are touring the facility.
- **33.** The research facility is rigged to self-destruct.
- 34. **Doctors** have orders to take biweekly blood samples from staff.
- 35. There are orders not to get "too attached" to the other staff.
- 36. Science lab security feeds transmit directly to Management.

THE OUTPOST

Remote, desolate, isolated. A bastion of light and warmth in a snowy wasteland, populated by the known in a land of unquantifiable terrors. A last resting place for the members of an ill-fated expedition.

After you die, the outpost will remain, whether intact or ruined. It will provide clues to what happened to any rescue parties whether they believe them is another story.

The Outpost is the setting much of your game will take place in, aside from the tundra outside and any auxiliary missions into the Thing Under the Ice. The horror of the known becoming hostile, and the subsequent taking-back of what's theirs, will provide much of the impetus of your story.

The Outpost is as important as the characters themselves.

Food and Water are recorded in Days Left for one person. Electric and Heat are simple yes or no answers. For every day without Food, Water, or Heat, all characters lose 1d3 maximum HP or gain an Injury. If there's no Electricity, you can't send out an emergency broadcast signal.

WSCA OUTPOST				
REQUISITION FORM 25-1 C				
Name				
FOOD 🔵	STAFF	Whenever a room or piece of equipment is		
WATER O		destroyed, mark the square next to it.		
	Aaximum Current			
HEAT O				
Rooms	_ Equip	ment		
2	1			
3	3			
4	4			
5	5			
6	6			
7	7			
8	8			
9	9			
10	10			
11	11			
12	12			
13	13			
14	14			
16	16			
17	17			
18	18			

GENERATING AN OUTPOST

d6	PURPOSE		SIZE
1	Mining		Tiny (1d3 rooms)
2	Geological Survey		Small (2d3 rooms)
3	Weather Observation		Medium (1d6+3 rooms)
4	Astronomical Observation	on	Large (2d6+2 rooms)
5	Biological Survey		Huge (3d6 rooms)
6	Relay Station		Complex (roll 2x, combine)
d6	EQUIPMENT STANDARD		DISREPAIR
1	Hopelessly Antiquated		Abandoned
2	Old but Serviceable		Structural Damage
3			Viruses in Computer
4	Slightly Out of Date, Mostly Useful		Generator Worn Out
5			Minor Repairs Needed
6	Cutting-Edge		Pristine
2d6 EXAMPLE ROOMS			
2	Greenhouse	8	Kitchen/Mess
3	Radio/Map Room	9	Motorpool
4	<u>c</u> .	^	K I

4	Storage	0	Kennel
5	Office	11	Biology Lab
6	Sleeping Quarters	12	Infirmary
7	Rec. Hall		

Rec. Hall

THE THING UNDER THE ICE

The reason for everything bad that befalls your group. Something old and uncanny, long buried and recently exhumed from the old rock and ice, exposed and unleashed on the world of men.

At first an object of wonder and trepidation for the group, something to be catalogued and studied regardless of the conditions of their employment. Surely the archeological find of the century, the millennium, is more important than strip mining or weathermonitoring?

The Thing Under the Ice should grow in the group's minds as a place that offers no real answers, becoming almost like a secondary villain. Maybe if they can destroy it or prevent other people from finding it these bloody events won't have to play out again.

WHAT IS THE THING?

Roll d33 (two d3's, read straight across) to randomly determine what the Thing is.

- 11. A black, inverted ziggurat, filled with organic-twisting tunnels. Made of seamless obsidian.
- 12. A huge, cyclopean city, the streets, buildings, and doorways too tall for humans.
- 13. A crashed space-faring vessel. Cold, ticking metal that defies categorization.
- 21. The Monster itself, frozen in the ice nearly 50 meters down. A calving glacier has exposed it in a cliffside.
- 22. Another modern research facility, entombed in ice strata at least 200 years old.
- 23. A circle of cairns made from bone, an open cave under the altar-stone.
- 31. Fragments of a strangely-hued meteorite.
- 32. A WWII-era bunker, long abandoned but still lit with electricity.
- 33. A monument or stele of pale white ivory. Radar says it extends at least another 200 meters into the ground.

EXPANDING THE THING

d6	EQUIPMENT MALFUNCTIONS		
1	Compass and GPS stop working.		
2	Recording equipment degrades.		
3	Flashlights flicker.		
4	Metal unbearably cool to the touch.		
5	Fires won't start.		
6	Spontaneous nosebleeds and dimming vision.		
d6	ENVIRONMENT IN THE THING		
1	Strange, sourceless glow.		
	5.,		
2	Warm and humid.		
2 3	U . U		
_	Warm and humid.		
3	Warm and humid. Pitch black.		

2d6

EXAMPLE ROOMS

2	Full of human teeth.	8	Oily bloodlike liquid dripping from ceiling.
3	Antechamber of smooth metal.	9	Vast, quiet machine in the center.
4	Strange rootlike veins growing like ivy.	10	Giant blind maggot-things twisting in papery nests.
5	Disconcerting statues.	11	Spiral mosaics induce nausea.
6	Neatly stacked mummies, like firewood.	12	Supply packs from a previous expedition; journal has a
7	Heiroglyphs on walls depict inhuman beings.	١Z	expedition; journal has a partial map.

OTHER HAZARDS

Supernatural events aside, the tundra offers plenty of danger on its own. Endless night, snow blindness, predatory fauna, and hypothermia all can quickly send your group to their deaths just as easily as an alien being or vicious god.

Hypothermia and frostbite can set in in minutes without proper clothing, killing an unprepared character in an hour. For every 5 minutes exposed to the outside temperatures, gain an Injury in the form of frostbitten flesh.

In a storm or blizzard, without functioning GPS or compasses, roll a d3 to determine if the group becomes lost. On a 1, they continue on their last heading; on a 2, they deviate by a few degrees, missing their mark; and on a 3, they go in a circle, winding up back where they started.

A SMALL BESTIARY

Animals and people use a similar statblock to Monsters, although with less absurd amounts of health and abilities. They also (usually) don't have recurring health pools like Monsters do.

Polar Bear 16 (2), TN 10 +0/+2/+3/+2 Hard to see in the snow. If Injured (brought to 0), will retreat to heal a bit and stalk the group. Sled-Dog 6, TN 9 +1/+2/+1/+3 Travel in packs of 2d6. Insane Researcher 10, TN 11 (snowsuit) +2/+1/+0/-1 Rifle (+2 to attack rolls)

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

The Thing, John Carpenter Alien, Ridley Scott The White Vault, K.A. Statz The Blair Witch Project, Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez Jaws, Steven Spielberg Black Mountain Side, Nick Szostakiwskyj At the Mountains of Madness, H.P. Lovecraft Annihilation, Jeff VanderMeer Event Horizon, Paul W. S. Anderson *Dead Space*, Michael Condrey and Bret Robbins The Last Winter, Larry Fessenden The Gag File, Aaron Dilloway Old Gods of Appalachia, Steve Shell Best Left Buried, Jellymuppet Troika!, Daniel Sell WSCAOS?, Jared Sinclair

NOTES & MAPS

Each square is 1⁄4 inches

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THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE ICE

Based on What's So Cool About Outer Space? by Jared Sinclair Written for the What's So Cool About Jam

@micaholism

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