

DAVAE BREON JAXON'S

CINEMATIC ENVIRONS

ARCTIC LANDS



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INTRODUCTION

The material in this book is intended to add to the energy and excitement that one should feel when adventuring in a dangerous and mysterious environment. While it's true that combat and social interactions make up a sizable and important portion of most role-playing sessions, the exploration of uncharted locations is another critical element of immersive gaming. The intention here is to add to the overall drama of your game by engaging the senses and cranking up the tension with heart-stopping hazards that can help make your world come alive for your players.

The hope is that you enjoy using this “overlay” and are sparked to create even more memories in the years to come.

THE RULE OF THREE

One of the most important aspects of cinematic role playing is the **Rule of Three**. When adjudicating the dangers presented in this book, be aware of what level of realism you, as a GM, are looking to provide.

In a realistic, brutal setting, allowing only **one** ability check or save to overcome the obstacle is acceptable.

A more adventurous, but still rather gritty feeling is achieved by allowing **two** ability checks or saves before lethal effects befall the heroes. This will give the players a real sense of danger, yet still encourage some heroic stunts.

And for a truly high-action, over-the-top cinematic feel, allow **three** ability checks or saves before the proverbial hammer falls on the characters.

For example, let's say that the party is attempting to climb a sheer cliff face to enter the Black Castle unseen. A deadly setting would see only **one** roll to avoid falling to one's death. In this case it might be that one poor Dexterity check would seal their fate.

A setting that mixes gritty action and heroic deeds would allow **two** rolls before dropping the characters on the rocks hundreds of feet below. In this case, perhaps the climbing roll fails, so an additional strength roll is needed to hold on with their fingertips.

In a cinematic setting of high fantasy and heroic actions, there would be at least **three** potential chances before tumbling

down the rocky mountain wall. In this case, it might be that the climbing skill fails and the strength check fails, but perhaps a Dexterity roll could save the falling hero as she grabs a root dangling nearby.

The **Rule of Three** also applies in the opposite direction when a character attempts to perform a stunt. The more skill or ability checks required to achieve the stunt, the more realistic and dangerous the action will be. In other words, asking for more rolls to succeed will lead to barriers when you want your player group to engage in cinematic action.

For example, suppose a player wants their character to snatch a tapestry from the wall, throw it over an orc guard and then push them out of an open window. In a realistic setting, that player may have to roll to snatch down the carpet, another roll to hit the orc, and yet another roll to knock them over.

In a gritty game, the game master (GM) may ask for a roll to cover the guard and another to knock them prone.

In a cinematic world, a single roll is all that is needed to give the orc a blanket party and send it on its way to oblivion.

It's important that you communicate with your group to decide collectively what sort of game you intend to run concerning the **Rule of Three**. Make sure all are in complete agreement to prevent conflicting expectations in the game.

USING AN ENVIRON

The following cinematic scenes or hazards are not truly monsters or even lairs. Yet it may be necessary to place the effects of the scene in some form of Initiative order. Pick an initiative system and remain consistent from one combat round to the next. Players may have to be tactical, expending an action to remain balanced or hold on, so be aware if a character does not have a movement or action available to maintain safety.

Flavor. At the beginning of each entry, there is a small narrative section that can help set the scene. Although you may certainly read the description verbatim if you wish, it is recommended that you describe the scene in your own words

as appropriate to the encounter and the mood of your game.

Each entry may also include additional options other than those listed below, or it may omit ones that do not apply. Details on their use will be included with each specific description.

Pressure. Sometimes your players will suffer from analysis-paralysis. If they are intent on remaining locked up, refusing to move either forward into danger or around the obstacle, these ideas can help to get the story moving.

If/Then. Many scenes are dangerous to traverse. The notes here describe which specific actions could cause certain consequences. This can and should give your players pause as they weigh various actions and what that means for them moving forward. Do they run across a frozen lake or walk carefully? Both options will have merit based on the party and their mission.

Even the Odds. This is a simple way to randomly pick targets in a crowd. Each target rolls a die. An **even** number means that subject is not targeted, but an **odd** number means suffering the effects of the environment, be it falling through ice, tripping over roots or being smashed against rocks while being swept away by a raging river.

Changes. Even a blizzard can get boring after a while. This section is a prompt to wake up lethargic players. Use one or more of these events to jump start the encounter as things change... for better or worse.

Fumblecrit. During any extreme activity, whether it's combat or dealing with a natural hazard, some will fumble while others will enjoy a critical success. This table will list a few events that you can either roll for, or choose from, to add to the drama and energy of the scene.

CONCLUSION

Although not intended to be a book of lairs or encounters, the environs and hazards provided in this book can offer great opportunities to a creative GM, allowing you to include various monsters or non-player characters (NPCs) and introduce new and exciting adventure locations.

DEFINITIONS

ADVANTAGE

Having **Advantage** means that you roll a second d20 when you make the roll. You then use the higher of the two rolls. For example, if you have **Advantage** and roll a 17 and a 5, you use the 17.

BLINDED

A blinded creature can't see and automatically fails any ability check that requires sight. Attack rolls against the creature have **Advantage**, and the creature's attack rolls have **Disadvantage**.

DEAFENED

A deafened creature can't hear and automatically fails any ability check that requires hearing.

DESPAIR

Spending enough time under extreme conditions is enough to wear anyone down. After enduring extreme conditions for 3 days + WIS modifier, you must make a successful Wisdom save (DC 10) or lose 1 point of Wisdom. The DC increases by 1 for each level of exhaustion you have suffered.

DIFFICULTY CLASS

For every ability check or saving throw, the GM decides which of the six abilities is relevant and the difficulty of the task or save, represented by a **Difficulty Class**, usually called the **DC**. The more difficult a task, the higher its **DC**. The table below shows the most common **DCs**.

| Task Difficulty | DC |
|-------------------|----|
| Very Easy | 5 |
| Easy | 10 |
| Medium | 15 |
| Hard | 20 |
| Very Hard | 25 |
| Nearly Impossible | 30 |

To make an ability check or save, roll a d20 and add the relevant ability modifier. As with other d20 rolls, apply bonuses and penalties, and compare the total to the **DC**. If the total equals or exceeds the **DC**, the ability check is a success, otherwise, it's a failure.

DISADVANTAGE

Having **Disadvantage** means that you roll a second d20 when you make the roll. You then use the lower of the two rolls. For example, if you have **Disadvantage** and roll a 17 and a 5, you use the 5.

EXHAUSTED

Some special abilities and environmental hazards, such as starvation and the long-term effects of freezing or scorching temperatures, can lead to a special condition called exhaustion.

Exhaustion is measured in six levels. An effect can give a creature one or more levels of exhaustion, as specified in the effect's description.

| Level | Effect |
|-------|---|
| 1 | <i>Disadvantage on ability checks</i> |
| 2 | <i>Speed halved</i> |
| 3 | <i>Disadvantage on attack rolls and Saving Throws</i> |
| 4 | <i>Hit point maximum halved</i> |
| 5 | <i>Speed reduced to 0</i> |
| 6 | <i>Death</i> |

If an already exhausted creature suffers another effect that causes exhaustion, its current level of exhaustion increases by the amount specified in the effect's description.

A creature suffers the effect of its current level of exhaustion as well as all lower levels. For example, a creature suffering level 2 exhaustion has its speed halved and has **Disadvantage** on ability checks.

An effect that removes exhaustion reduces its level as specified in the effect's description, with all exhaustion effects ending if a creature's exhaustion level is reduced below 1.

Finishing a long rest reduces a creature's exhaustion level by 1, provided that the creature has also ingested some food and drink.

HYPOTHERMIA

This is a state of deep cold where the body begins to shut down, and the creature's core body temperature begins to drop.

When a creature is exposed to extreme cold without protection, they must make a Constitution save (DC 15) every 30 minutes or become hypothermic. The DC increases by 1 after each check to a maximum of 25. The creature with hypothermia has **Disadvantage** on all Dexterity and Intelligence checks, they suffer 1 level of *Exhaustion*, and their movement is reduced by half.

Every 30 minutes thereafter, they must make a Constitution save (at the current DC) or suffer another level of *Exhaustion*. This process continues until they either warm up or die.

INCAPACITATED

An **Incapacitated** creature can't take actions or reactions.

INVISIBLE

An invisible creature is impossible to see without the aid of magic or a special sense. For the purpose of hiding, the creature is heavily obscured. The creature's location can be detected by any noise it makes or any tracks it leaves.

Attack rolls against the creature have **Disadvantage**, and the creature's attack rolls have **Advantage**.

PARALYZED

A paralyzed creature is **Incapacitated** (see above) and can't move or speak. The creature automatically fails Strength and

Dexterity **Saving Throws**. Attack rolls against the creature have **Advantage**. Any attack that hits the creature is a critical hit if the attacker is within 5 feet of the creature.

PRONE

A prone creature's only movement option is to crawl, unless it stands up and thereby ends the condition.

The creature has **Disadvantage** on attack rolls. An attack roll against the creature has **Advantage** if the attacker is within 5 feet of the creature. Otherwise, the attack roll has **Disadvantage**.

RESISTANCE

If a creature or an object has **Resistance** to a damage type, damage of that type is halved against it.

RESTRAINED

A **Restrained** creature's speed becomes 0, and it can't benefit from any bonus to its speed. Attack rolls against the creature have **Advantage**, and the creature's attack rolls have **Disadvantage**. The creature has **Disadvantage** on Dexterity **Saving Throws**.

SAVING THROW

A **Saving Throw** — also called a **Save** — represents an attempt to resist a spell, a trap, a poison, a disease, or a similar threat.

SHAKEN

You are momentarily gripped by fear and doubt. You cannot use your ability score bonuses and have a **Disadvantage** to do anything related to that which has shaken you. This condition remains until you take a full round to gather yourself.

Those who are immune or resistant to fear cannot be **Shaken**.

STUNNED

A **Stunned** creature is **Incapacitated** (see above), can't move, and can speak only falteringly. The creature automatically fails Strength and Dexterity **Saving Throws**. Attack rolls against the creature have **Advantage**.

UNCONSCIOUS

An unconscious creature is **Incapacitated** (see above), can't move or speak, and is unaware of its surroundings. The creature drops whatever it's holding and falls prone. The creature automatically fails Strength and Dexterity **Saving Throws**.

Attack rolls against the creature have **Advantage**. Any attack that hits the creature is a critical hit if the attacker is within 5 feet of the creature.



ARCTIC CONDITIONS

I immediately began to regret my choice to travel north. The bitter cold was enough to crack my flesh until it bled. The sky was cloudless and the sun bright, but did nothing to warm my bones.

Our rations were frozen solid, and I had to put the dried meat in my armpit to warm it enough to chew. I cannot recommend the flavor.

No matter where one travels within a particular environ, there will be aspects that are common throughout the entire region. The following section outlines conditions that are likely to effect the characters no matter where they go.

REGIONAL PRESSURES

Without the skills to survive in an arctic climate, death is almost inevitable. Maintaining a healthy heart rate and getting blood to the extremities is of utmost importance.

Additionally, the characters will always be seeking somewhere to shelter, particularly during extreme conditions, such as a blizzard, or when night falls to attempt to get some much needed rest.

In an arctic environ, it is always a race against time and fatigue to get to someplace warm before exhaustion, bitter cold or desperate predators overcome them.

REGIONAL CONDITIONS

Remember to be consistent and adjudicate your gaming table when situations arrive that hinder the party. Listed below are some possible hazards and minor setbacks that a frozen climate can offer.

Deep Cold. Arctic regions are almost always gripped by unimaginable cold that can kill an exposed creature very quickly. Any creature out in the cold without the

proper protection must make a Constitution save or become hypothermic (see Hypothermia on page 5).

Despair. Making a long trek across the harsh arctic landscape is foreboding and can crush the spirit of the most seasoned adventurer. If your game has a strong element of realism, you may ask for a Wisdom save (DC 10) once per day to determine how the characters are dealing with the stress. Failure means losing 1 point of Wisdom. If the character reaches 6 Wisdom or less, this despair could cause the victim to give up, sit down, and do nothing to save themselves from the cold or predators.

Freezing Liquids. Most common liquids will freeze solid in arctic climates. These can include healing potions, drinking water and other liquids that might be of value. The GM must decide if the liquid can still be used once melted or if it has any reduced effects. Note that most glass containers will break if the liquid inside freezes.

Frostbite. Prolonged exposure to extreme cold without sufficient protection can lead to frostbite in the extremities. Each hour spent exposed to the elements requires a successful Constitution save (DC 12) or lose 1 point of Dexterity due to numbness and pain.

If the setting is particularly brutal, the GM could have the frostbitten character lose 1d4 fingers or toes to frostbite after failing their Constitution save 5 times in a row, and 1 more for each failure thereafter.

Recovering from frostbite takes a long time, with the character recovering 1 Dexterity point per long rest.

Midnight Sun. In the far northern arctic regions of worlds with an axial tilt, there can be a period of time in the winter where the sun never rises, and a period of time in the summer when the sun never sets. These times occur around the solstice, and can last for days or weeks depending on the world and the distance north. This may or may not have a mechanical effect on the campaign, depending on the circumstances.

For example, if the party is dealing with creatures that fear daylight, then encountering them in a far northern land around the time of the winter solstice could make things much more challenging. On a more mundane level, with perpetual daylight, it could become particularly difficult for characters to get to sleep. The GM will determine if the amount of daylight affects the characters and to what degree.

Noisy. Being quiet is difficult when crushing ice under foot. This may make create a *Disadvantage* to all stealth attempts in the frozen wastes.

Tracks. Unless winds and snow cover a creature's trail, they will leave a very noticeable set of tracks across an untouched, snowy landscape.

Uncomfortable. Sleeping and resting is uncomfortable at best. The effects of short and long rests may need to be modified depending on the specific conditions.

The GM could simply double the rest time required to gain the normal benefits (2 hours for a short rest and 16 hours for a long rest), or in a more brutal environment, the GM could make 8 hours the equivalent of a short rest and 7 days a long rest.

SUPERNATURAL OR ALIEN CONDITIONS

Whether your world is steeped in arcane magic or just happens to have planetary conditions that differ from our own, it's important to consider how these things will affect your environs. The following are a few examples that one could add to an arctic setting.

Arctic Cyclone. As the sky darkens, the clouds overhead begin to swirl. Within minutes, a funnel cloud descends and tears its way across the landscape. This whirlwind will tear apart wooden structures, shred tents, and pick up anything not firmly secured to the ground.

Any creature in its path must make a successful Strength check or be hurled 2d6 x 10 feet, taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet they were thrown. The creature lands prone.

Black Cold. At night, the temperature drops so low that any exposure is deadly. It can be only a matter of minutes before a creature is overcome and freezes to death.

Once the sun sets, the temperature drops rapidly. Anyone who is not inside of a heated shelter will have to make a successful Constitution save (DC 18) every 10 minutes or suffer 1 level of exhaustion. This can lead to death in less than an hour, even with full cold weather gear. The party should start looking for shelter as early as possible.

Bursting Ice. At first glance, this area appears to be nothing more than a vast rough ice field surrounded by glaciers. Beneath the surface however, great pressures build up, driven by the titanic glaciers. Every so often (once or twice per day), these pressures cause large areas of ice to explode, sending tons of ice shrapnel in all directions.

These explosions can also be triggered by vibrations on its surface. If a party is traveling across such an ice field, the GM should roll a d6 every 30 minutes. On a roll of 1, there is an explosion of ice nearby. Each creature must then succeed on a Dexterity save (DC 12) or suffer 3d6 hit points of bludgeoning damage. If the party makes any loud noises, the chance of an explosion increases to 1-3 on a d6.

Razor Ice Storm. In the winter, deadly storms push down from the north, bringing the dreaded Razor Ice Storms. Although these storms move through an area quickly, they can leave countless unsheltered creatures dead in their wake.

As the storm hits, the leading edge of the storm is punctuated by violent lightning strikes. During the first 10 minutes of the storm, there is a 1 in 20 chance that lightning will strike within the vicinity of the party. If this happens, each character must make a Constitution save (DC 15). Anyone who fails suffers 4d6 hit points of electrical damage. Any who succeed suffer half of that damage.

For the next 50 minutes, ice rages down from the sky. Although similar to hail, these chunks of ice have sharp, jagged edges that can slash flesh to ribbons if not protected. Every 10 minutes that the characters are uncovered, they must make Dexterity saves (DC 10) or suffer 2d4 hit points of slashing damage. If they are wearing armor or cold weather clothing, this damage is halved.

ABILITY SCORE LOSS

Unless otherwise stated, any ability score points that are lost as a result of environmental conditions are restored at a rate of 1 point per hour once those conditions have been rectified.

For example, if one is suffering from the cold, then time spent in a warm, dry place will allow the creature to recover.

An excerpt from the Journal of Artemus Hale

Having recently returned from arctic wastes to the north, I now realize that I underestimated the extreme conditions to be found there.

There was a distinct lack of resources which could, if our party had not been prepared, have spelled disaster for our expedition.

That being said, even with the proper gear, supplies and the skill to use them, the arctic lands are unforgiving and cruel, second only to the desert in its harshness. After all, if one manages to get a fire going, at least there is water that can be coaxed from the ice.

In the end however, we were fortunate enough to return with all of our expedition's appendages intact, and perhaps a greater appreciation for the comforting warmth of hearth and home.

ARCTIC HAZARDS

In the winter of 6432 of the 5th Age, Artemus Hale and his party of eight adventurers set off to explore the great northern wastelands beyond the Harshbrek Mountains.

What was meant to be a two month expedition turned into four months of struggle, suffering and despair.

When the Hale expedition returned to civilized lands, they brought with them extraordinary tales of ice giants, pale dragons and conditions so extreme that even their magic was barely enough to sustain them.

Artemus and his party have graciously shared their experiences through the pages of this book in the hopes that others might learn from their mistakes.

ARCTIC HAZARDS

AVALANCHE

Our greatest mistake came when the mage cast a spell of thunder to frighten off the wolf pack that had taken an interest in us. We failed to consider the tenuous sheet of snow above us, as it was set to motion by the deafening sound. We could feel the deep snow and frozen rock tremble as entire mountainside began to shift. A titanic sheet of snow, ice, and rocks descended upon us. We were in the grips of an avalanche!

PRESSURE

The characters must take cover or run for shelter. Otherwise the party will be hit with the full impact of the snow and ice tumbling down the mountainside. This event can dramatically change the environment, wiping out settlements, blocking roads and filling narrow valleys.

IF / THEN

If your players do not intend to find shelter in any way, then all checks or saves related to the avalanche are attempted at a *Disadvantage*.

CHANGES

The snow and ice will slam into all who remain exposed for 1d4 rounds. Failing to make a Dexterity save (DC 20) will drive the character down hill by a number of feet equal to 10 x the amount they failed the DC. For example, if the player ends up with a save roll of 12, that is 8 less than required, and so the character will be swept 80 feet.

EVEN THE ODDS

An odd roll means that they are covered in 10 to 40 feet (1d4 x 10 feet) of snow and ice. A character can dig 1 foot of snow plus their strength bonus each round, though a group can combine digging efforts to rescue a buried companion. Being covered causes 1d4 Constitution loss per round as they are crushed and begin suffocating. Anyone stuck in the snow is incapacitated.

FUMBLECRIT

- 1 Victim's pack and all items in hand are lost in the snow; stunned for 1 to 4 rounds with a similar loss of health or life.
- 2 Victim loses 1 to 4 items in the snow. It will be a Hard challenge to find any one item. Also stunned for 1 round and prone.
- 3 Victim drops a handheld item in the snow. It is a Medium challenge to find the item. Stunned for 1 round and prone.
- 4 Victim drops a handheld item in the snow. It will be Easy to find, but now they are prone.

An excerpt from the Journal of Artemus Hale

We have finally recovered the last of our gear after nearly four hours of searching and digging. It could have been much worse.

Kerharn sustained a break to the upper arm from a bit of the larger debris that slammed down upon us like the hand of some terrible, angry god of ice and stone. He is resting now, but it will be morning before we can set and heal it properly. Brother Falwhen is exhausted, as are we all, and is unable to do more tonight.

In the future, we must be wary of making excessive noise in these lands. It does perhaps explain the soft-spoken mannerisms of the odd fur trader we met a few days ago. He spoke in such hushed tones, we had to lean in to hear his words.

The avalanche has uncovered a cave entrance on the mountainside and Vala has gone to explore it as a viable place to spend the night. We must use caution since the opening shows signs of having been shaped by intelligent hands. We can only hope that nothing still resides within. On the bright side, the wolves have fled.

BLIZZARD

I could only see my hands and feet. For hours on end the frigid cold bit deeply into my flesh. The winds cut my face with jagged ice and snow. I lifted my tired feet into the horizontal onslaught like an automaton. In all my years, I never understood what a blizzard truly was until now.

PRESSURE

The frigid temperatures and piling snow should motivate players to act and move. Otherwise, it's a slow and sleep-filled death as fatigue and frost consume the party.

IF / THEN

All perception checks using hearing and sight, as well as ranged attacks, are at a *Disadvantage*. Flying is nearly impossible, requiring the creature to land at the end of 1 round or fall down from their current altitude. Use common sense and a consistent ruling when adjudicating whether an action can be performed at a *Disadvantage* or not at all.

EVEN THE ODDS

Wind gusts, flying objects, tripping hazards and whiteout conditions can randomly effect anyone under the blizzard's merciless effects.

CHANGES

Whiteout. The region is covered in blinding and thick snow and the wind is physically painful to withstand. Visibility is reduced to 5 feet. All ranged combat and perception attempts are impossible. Launching any ranged attack with a physical component is negated by the winds and snow.

Hearing is near impossible, and communication is only possible by talking in someone's ear, or some prostheses (whether magical or technological). An enemy greater than 5 feet away is treated as if invisible.

Moving faster than half speed requires making a successful Wisdom or Dexterity save (DC 15) or the creature falls prone.

Frigid Temperatures. Creatures must make Constitution saves (DC 10) every hour or suffer 1 level of exhaustion.

FUMBLECRITS

- 1 Victim falls prone. Items not held fast will be snatched away by the harsh winds. This includes hats, cloaks, papers, etc. They cannot be recovered until the blizzard ends, and only after a long search.
- 2 Victim falls. An item held in the hand flies 4d10 feet away. Recovering it requires a successful perception check (DC 15).
- 3 Victim becomes lost and disoriented. Make a perception or survival check (DC 15) to return to a known path or find a familiar landmark.
- 4 Victim gets hit by a random flying object like a tree branch or small rock. Suffer 1d4 hit points of damage.
- 5 The victim's hands become frostbitten and numb. Any objects in their hands are dropped and cannot be picked up until warmed and rested. The hands cannot be used for manual manipulation, like using a gun, picking a lock, or casting a spell.
- 6 Victim becomes blinded by his or her own tears. Spend an action to wipe the frost away or remain blinded.

We have finally found shelter in a natural cave in the side of an exposed cliff, and thanks to some rather clever use of arcane fire, we have some much needed warmth and light.

Now that we have had a moment to catch our breaths, we can see that the cave goes back into the rock much farther than first believed. Vala has taken one of our precious torches to investigate a rather unsettling sound in the darkness.



ICE CLIFFS

The wind was a constant reminder to me that any mistake would cost me my life. I hung from ropes for what seemed like hours as I scaled the frozen waterfall. I was tucked between the huge icicles when a winged mount and its rider circled around the cliff face. I dared not make my presence known. A simple jab from her lance would send me tumbling to my doom.

PRESSURE

Climbing a frozen cliff or waterfall is idiocy at best. Doing it quickly is paramount. Finding a way around would be difficult and time consuming.

EVEN THE ODDS

As the players make skill checks to climb at a hard difficulty, have them *Even the Odds* of an icicle breaking away and dropping from above striking the character. An odd result will do 1 to 4 points of damage. But the greater danger is losing grip and falling.

IF / THEN

If the party is united and working together, such as roping each member in line, then use the rules in your game for team work. Otherwise assign an *Advantage* to the climb checks for each character. Any action – be it movement, combat or bonus – must include holding on to the ropes and other climbing gear. Otherwise, falling is almost certain.

Hanging on the wall means being an easy target for enemies. Please use the rule of three when choosing to place your players in this position. Balance how many skill challenges you want versus how likely are they to succeed.

CHANGES

Falling Ice! Random ice and debris can fall on the party. Along with damage, have the hurt target roll to hold on with a DC of 10 if the victim is healthy, 15 if they are bruised, or 20 if they are mortally wounded. A failure means letting go of the ropes or climbing gear. Refer back to your rule of three concerning how many rolls are used to save themselves from death.

Enemies Attack! The party will not be in a good place, with no ability to move, dodge or benefit from a Dexterity bonus. The attackers, if mounted or above, have *Advantage* to hit the party. Attacks can target the ropes themselves.

Falling! It's up to the GM to decide if falling is an automatic death or if the character is stopped by an outcropping, suffering damage, but avoiding the hundred foot drop to the bottom.

FUMBLECRIT

- 1 Victim falls and gets tangled in a support rope, strangling themselves by their own weight. Suffocation means losing 1d4 points of Constitution or a similar stat until the rope is cut. Cutting the rope will force the victim to fall. The rope is easy to cut.
- 2 Target falls and dislocates shoulder as they are brutally yanked on an arrester rope or grip an outcropping. One arm is completely useless until healed or rested.
- 3 Accidentally drop 1d4 items from belt or pack
- 4 Target falls. Hits icy face of cliff and becomes stunned for 1d4 rounds.
- 5 The ice is sharp enough to pierce deep into the victim. Suffer an open, bleeding wound. Lose 1d4 hit points and lose 1 point each round.
- 6 Hands become numb from the cold. Must rest or heal them before regaining use.

ICY CREVASSE

My fear had me paralyzed. Do I walk along the surface of the snow, only to fall into an unseen crevasse, or do I climb down into the cracked snow and follow the winding path below, only to be buried as the walls collapsed around me?

PRESSURE

The depth of the snow in these climates can range anywhere from several feet to hundreds. The greatest dangers are falling into an unseen crevasse hidden just beneath the surface or wandering into a maze of ice gullies where death can come from above. Getting around or across an icy crevasse is dangerous, but sitting still will only allow the McGuffin to get that much further away.

IF / THEN

The Pits. A sheet of thin ice and snow covers a natural pit or crevice. Finding these pits requires a Perception check (DC 15). If the character is a skilled explorer, or if the character is using something like a staff to check the snow in their path, the check is made with *Advantage*. They must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC 15) to avoid falling 10 to 40 feet down, though snow may cushion the fall. *Even the Odds* to determine if this fall causes harm.

The crevasse can be as small as a tube that wedges the victim at the bottom, or it can be a true cavern formed from snow and ice. The latter could be a safe haven or an entrance to a bigger threat.

Bottom Side. Walking the crevasse floor is an option, but the party is limited to a specific direction and destination. Their position also makes them vulnerable to attacks from above, giving ranged or thrown weapons *Advantage* to hit. Winged creatures cannot fly easily within a crevasse (GM's discretion).

The benefit to traveling in a crevasse is the cover it provides from harsh winds and being seen by enemies.

CHANGES

Collapse! Whether walking on the surface of the snow or trekking the floor of the crevasse, there is a chance that

the snow will crumble and collapse. If this happens, *Even the Odds* to see if someone is covered in the heavy snow and trapped. *Odd* means they are covered in 10 feet to 40 feet of snow and ice. Characters can dig 1 foot of snow plus Strength modifier each round. A party can combine digging efforts. Being covered causes 1d4 points of Constitution loss per round as they are crushed and suffocating. Anyone stuck in the snow cannot move and has no Dexterity modifier.

Hunters! A predator or native hunting party will try to attack the party at their most vulnerable, such as when they are climbing up or down the crevasse walls.

The party will have to choose whether to fight back or aid any companions who may still be hanging from the wall.

The GM should consider a lower challenge rating for the encounter since the hazard will amplify the threat.



FROZEN LAKE

The frigid climate has frozen the lake before me. This desolate landscape stretches as far to the east as it does to the west. A small animal makes its way across the smooth glassy surface. Soon, the small creature is lost in the distance. I must make my way across or waste valuable time going around. I steel my nerve as the lake waters flow below the all-too-thin surface.

PRESSURE

Crossing this expanse is dangerous. However, with enemies bearing down from behind, going around will more than double the travel time. The McGuffin is already making its way to the shore on the other side. Your players may want to take a chance and cross.

IF / THEN

If a character is walking no faster than half of their movement rate, then that character can cross the lake without falling prone. If the character is moving faster than half of their movement rate, the character must succeed on a Dexterity save (DC 10) or fall prone. Moving at full speed increases the DC to 15.

If a character is taking another action while moving (such as engaging in combat), then that character has *Disadvantage* on any saves to remain on their feet.

CHANGES

Cracked Ice. Warn your players that hairline fractures explode across the frozen lake surface before dumping them into the frigid water. A crack across the lake can separate a group of combatants. To jump across, a character must make a Dexterity or Acrobatics check (DC 15) or fall through the crack (see *Falling Through the Ice*). If a character chooses to spend an action preparing before the jump, the check is made with *Advantage*.

Islands of Ice. The lake surface shatters into numerous ice floats (see *Cracked Ice*).

Falling Through the Ice. This can be a random effect, depending on whether the ice is thin or already cracked. If there is a good chance of breaking through the ice, then *Even the Odds*

to determine if anyone plunges into the icy darkness. Otherwise, have the characters make a Dexterity save or fall through. The GM should set the difficulty based on the thickness of the ice:

| Ice Thickness | Difficulty |
|----------------------|------------|
| Up to 1 inch | DC 20 |
| 1 inch to 2 inches | DC 15 |
| 2 inches to 3 inches | DC 10 |

Falling into the water induces severe hypothermia in a number of minutes equal to the character's Constitution bonus.

Even after leaving the water, the effects of hypothermia continue until the creature is warm and dry.

Breaking the Ice. To recover a creature or object that has fallen through the ice and is still within reach, the character must make a Dexterity check (DC 15). If the ice must first be broken, the character must inflict 15 hit points of damage to smash through the surface. Of course they must be careful not to fall in themselves.

FUMBLECRIT

- 1 Victim plunges through the ice and into the frigid water. They are stunned and suffer a loss of 1d4 Constitution points and an equal amount of hit points. All items carried fall to the bottom of the lake or river. The victim floats under the thick ice, which must be pierced in order for them to reach the surface.
- 2 Victim falls through the ice and into the frigid water. They are stunned for 1d4 rounds and drop anything they are holding.
- 3 Victim falls down. An arm or leg punches through the ice into the frigid water, paralyzing the limb. They are considered prone.
- 4 Victim twists an ankle or pops a knee. They lose their Dexterity bonus and their movement is halved.
- 5 Victim falls prone and drops whatever they are holding. The object or objects slide 4d10 feet away.
- 6 Victim spins in place, turning their back to the action and any potential danger.



RAGING RIVER

The hunters and their wild pets were on my trail a few miles to the south. I had to find a way to obscure my scent. Crossing the rapids of the treacherous Karbrek river was my only chance. I placed a foot in the flowing, icy water, and came to the desperate realization that either choice was likely death. I began to cross, my heart struggling to move warm blood to my extremities.

PRESSURE

Being chased by pursuers can motivate a reluctant party, leaving them with little option but to cross the river as their only chance for escape.

On the other hand, the party could be the hunters in pursuit of a quarry and, if they don't cross the river, they may never pick up their trail again.

IF / THEN

As the GM, you can decide how deep the river is, or make it a random element. If ankle-deep, only apply a penalty or *Disadvantage* to dodging ranged attacks. Resisting the water's pull requires a Dexterity save with a DC of 10.

If waist-deep, remove all Dexterity bonuses and apply *Disadvantage* as well. Spotting dangers and objects in the water is also at *Disadvantage*. Movement is halved. Resisting the water's pull requires a Dexterity save with a DC of 15.

If the water is chest-deep or greater, movement is only 5 feet per round. Apply all of the above modifiers. Resisting the raging water requires a Dexterity save with a DC of 20.

EVEN THE ODDS

Each round in the water requires stepping carefully and keeping one's balance or risk falling and getting carried away by the force of the frigid waters.

Ice Cold Water. A subject can remain immersed for a number of minutes equal to his or her Constitution bonus before suffering hypothermia. Each minute beyond that time, requires a successful Constitution save (DC 15) to avoid

hypothermia. Any actions beyond this time period will have lost the use of hands and feeling in the feet. Objects can still be held, but the victim is at *Disadvantage* when performing any balancing or walking action or using the hands for any fine manipulation.

Drowning. While swimming, each foot of movement costs 1 extra foot (2 extra feet in difficult terrain), unless the creature has a swimming speed. At the GM's option, gaining any distance in rough water might require a successful Strength (Athletics) check.

A creature can hold its breath for a number of minutes equal to 1 + its Constitution modifier (minimum of 30 seconds).

When a creature runs out of breath or takes water into its lungs, it can survive for a number of rounds equal to its Constitution modifier (minimum of 1 round). At the start of its next turn, it drops to 0 hit points and is dying. It can't regain hit points or be stabilized until it can breathe again.

Consider the additional effects of the force of the water. In addition to moving across the river, the subject who swims or gets carried away will move 1d4 x 10 feet downstream.

Anyone suffering a physical injury must make a Constitution save (DC 15) or begin drowning. The DC is 20 if they sustain a critical hit. A failure means suffering the loss of 1d4 points of Constitution.

FUMBLECRIT

- 1 Target falls, swallows water and drops anything in their hands. They are carried away downstream, the items are lost, never to be recovered. Target hits head, stunned for 1d4 rounds, suffering drowning effects.
- 2 Target falls and traps an arm or foot between rocks on the bottom. They are underwater and must be pulled free. This requires a Strength or Dexterity check (DC 15).
- 3 Target falls prone, dropping any handheld items. They float free, down river. Victim can stand up, but is moved 10 feet to 40 feet downstream.
- 4 Target stumbles, dropping a handheld item.



TUNDRA

I was blinded by the white. I had to shield my eyes as the unaltered landscape slowly came into focus. I could make out a pine tree here and a rocky outcropping there. Every surface was covered with several feet of snow. My dark clothing stood in sharp contrast to the pure white snow. The horizon seemed infinitely distant as I trudged through the crisp ivory snowpack.

PRESSURE

Refusing to travel through the frozen wasteland will only prolong a slow and painful death. Hunting for food, finding shelter, and gathering wood will all fade to nothing by remaining in one place. Pack hunters and white stalkers are drawn to the warmth of fire and life. Moving is the best option. Remind the players that the cold calls for you to sleep and never wake.

IF / THEN

If moving at half speed and taking plenty of rest-breaks, then there are no penalties. If moving faster than half speed, it is the equivalent of a forced march.

For each hour of travel, each character must make a Constitution saving throw at the end of the hour. The DC is 10 + 1 for each hour traveled without a rest. On a failed saving throw, a character suffers 1 level of exhaustion.

Any character who was born and raised in a similar environment or has arctic survival proficiency, does not suffer these penalties.

EVEN THE ODDS

Stumbling upon natural obstacles – such as pits, outcrops, animal dens, and so on – is a risk requiring a random element. *Even the Odds* in these cases.

CHANGES

Tripping. The party crosses an area filled with tripping hazards and sharp rocks. Random victims must succeed on a Dexterity save (DC 10) or fall down prone.

The Pits. A sheet of thin ice and snow covers a natural pit or crevice. Finding these pits requires a successful perception check (DC 20) using only sight. The DC is reduced to 15 if they are using tools like a staff or long stick. Skilled explorers have *Advantage* on this save.

Even the Odds to see if a random party member stumbles into the pit or crevice. Jumping the hazard requires an Acrobatics check (DC 15) to avoid falling 5d8 feet down. Snow may cushion the fall. *Even the Odds* to determine if this fall causes no harm.

Snow Blindness. Picking out landmarks can be hard due to the vast blanket of white snow. Characters have *Disadvantage* to spotting anything that remotely blends into the white snow. This includes other party members and light-colored enemies.

FUMBLECRITS

- 1 Target falls down in the snow, dropping any held objects. They are prone. Small items like rings or stones are completely lost. Larger items like swords, guns or staves can be found with a successful perception roll (DC 10). They are snow blind for 1d4 rounds.
- 2 Target falls prone and is snow blind for 1 round, dropping one object held in their hand. The item can be found with ease.
- 3 Target falls prone.
- 4 Target becomes snow blind for 1 round.

APPENDIX

NEW BACKGROUND

ARCTIC BORN

Born in the wastes of the far north, you are accustomed to living in regions of scarcity and deep cold. You have witnessed the beauty of the spirit lights rippling across the stars like a great veil. You have been through times of endless day when the sun dances at the edge of the horizon and endless night when the wolves gather at the doors of your home.

Though the lands are hard, the people are kind and caring. They are bound together by the shared experience of living in the land of perpetual ice.

Skill Proficiencies: Athletics, Survival

Tool Proficiencies: Leatherworker's Tools

Languages: One of your choice.

Equipment: A staff, a bone-handled hunting knife, cold weather clothing, snow shoes, an atlatl, a sun stone, and a belt pouch containing 2d4 gem stones worth 1gp each.

FEATURE: ARCTIC SURVIVOR

You have lived through environmental conditions that would have killed a lesser person. You, therefore, have a much easier time dealing with the discomfort associated with cold, hunger, and endless sheets of snow.

When it seems impossible, you are able to locate or build shelter from the elements, turning the most mundane materials into a bulwark against the cold.

Lastly, you are accustomed to navigating without any prominent landmarks, using only the sun and stars to lead you across the most barren, featureless landscape. If you are able to see the sun or night sky, you can easily maintain a heading or find your way to a known location.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Often seen a gruff and cold, you give your heart freely and usually think the best of people.

d8 Personality Trait

- 1 Home is not a place, but wheresoever is the heart, I carry my home with me.
- 2 Waste not, want not. Raised in conditions of extreme scarcity, it is vital that nothing is ever wasted.
- 3 I was forged by the land. It has taught me so much and I want to learn as much about anyplace I travel.
- 4 I am not comfortable with crowds or meeting new people. Trusting someone takes time, but when I do, it's forever.
- 5 I have no use for worldly possessions. I am content with the things that I can carry on my back.

- 6 I am fascinated by every facet of the urban lifestyle and can't get enough of cities or towns.
- 7 I prefer to be in the company of friends, even if we are just sitting quietly and looking at the stars.
- 8 I can handle any situation and will be the first to offer my help when there is someone in need.

d6 Ideal

- 1 **Cooperation.** Only by working together can we survive and thrive. (Good)
- 2 I can handle it... alone.
- 3 **Freedom.** I was born free, I live free, and I will die free. (Chaos)
- 4 **Strength.** Might makes right! I am the natural leader in any group. (Evil)
- 5 **Natural Order.** Living under the harshest of conditions has shown me that there is order in everything. (Lawful)
- 6 **Balance.** Light and darkness each have their time and so must all things be in balance with its opposite. (Neutral)

d6 Bond

- 1 My people still reside in the north and I will always be welcome there.
- 2 I left the arctic wastes to bring a lost traveler home. He is eternally grateful and still keeps in touch.
- 3 I know many of the trappers and traders throughout the region and they are a great source of news for me.
- 4 My people were wiped out by a rival tribe and the war lord who rules over them has vowed to track me down and kill me since I am the last of my bloodline.
- 5 My father is the prisoner of a barbaric tyrant and one day I will free him.
- 6 A man holds me responsible for the death of his son who froze to death while in my care. I believe he is right.

d6 Flaw

- 1 I've never needed any help with anything, so just let me do it.
- 2 If there is a difficult way to do something, I prefer that.
- 3 I have always prided myself on my courage and will not tolerate being called a coward.
- 4 I was once trapped under an avalanche for many hours. To this day I cannot stand being in close or enclosed spaces.
- 5 I was born to the deep cold. Any place that is above 50° f (10° c) is uncomfortably hot to me. There is a good chance that I will strip down to just my loin cloth.
- 6 I received no formal education as a child and, as such, I was never able to get the hang of reading and writing. At this point, I've given up all hope of learning to do either.

NEW EQUIPMENT

Arctic Clothing. Although rather bulky, these fur-lined clothes are standard in regions of deep cold. A cold weather outfit includes a knee-length coat with a deep hood, layered gloves, and soft fur-lined boots.

In addition to removing any penalties resulting from intense cold, these clothes are so thick that they provide the protective equivalent of Hide Armor [AC 12 + Dex modifier (max 2)].

There is enough room inside the coat to store a number of smaller items that the wearer might wish to protect against the cold, including potion vials and waterskins.

If the character has the *Arctic Born* background, they can fashion a complete set of *Arctic Clothing* in 2 days, assuming the materials are available.

Cleats. These spikes tie onto the exterior of any footwear, and improve the wearer's ability to move across icy surfaces by providing greater traction. This negates any *Disadvantages* related to slipping on ice, though they could provide a benefit on any slippery surface.

Frostbite Salve. This alchemical salve eases the effects of frostbite, reducing the recovery time by half.

Shovel. This simple tool cuts the digging time in half, whether creating snow shelters, tunneling through snow drifts, or rescuing companions buried by an avalanche.

Skis and Poles. When secured to the feet, these polished wooden slats enable the wearer to glide across level snowy surfaces at their normal movement rate. Their speed is halved when moving up a snowy slope, but doubled when moving downhill on gentle slopes or quadrupled on steep slopes.

Snow Goggles. This eye wear is crafted from either bone or leather. They have a narrow slit opening through which the wearer can see and is held in place with leather straps.

These goggles prevent *Snow Blindness* and increase visibility during a *Whiteout* to 10 feet.

Snowshoes. Crafted from leather webbing laced across wooden or bone frames, this wide foot gear can be secured to the bottom of any boots. Snowshoes improve the wearer's ability to move across deep snow, reducing the penalty for walking by 50%.

If they have a proficiency in *Survival* and the *Arctic Born* background, the character can fashion a pair of snowshoes in about two hours, assuming they have the time and materials to do so.

Sun Stone. Also known as *Felspar* or *Ice Stone*, this clear rectangular crystal can be found near exposed cliffs in certain places in the northern lands. On overcast days, when the sun's position cannot be determined behind the clouds, looking through the *Sun Stone* will reveal its location.

This eliminates any navigation penalties due to overcast skies or whiteout conditions when traveling during the day.

NEW WEAPONS

Atlatl. An atlatl is essentially a stick with a handle on one end and a hook or socket that engages a light spear or "dart" on the other. The flipping motion of the atlatl propels a light spear much faster and farther than it could be thrown by hand alone. [Use the statistics for the *Javelin*, except that the range is 60/200.]

Hunting Club. This long, curved club is used for hunting up to medium-sized game. It is usually fashioned from a large bone, tusk or hard wood. It often has a leather-wrapped handle for a better grip in the cold. [Use the statistics for the *Club*, except that it can be thrown with a range of 20/60.]

Hunting Knife. This single-edged blade is longer and broader than a typical dagger. It sometimes has a serrated edge along the thick back that allows it to be used as a saw for cutting branches and small trees.

It is designed to be a multi-purpose tool of survival, used for everything from preparing fire wood to skinning game and can even be secured to the end of a stick as a makeshift spear. [Use the statistics for the *dagger*, except that it cannot be thrown, and can function as a spear if it is secured to the end of a wooden shaft. This process takes a minimum of 10 minutes, assuming the necessary materials are available.]



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THE STORY OF DAVAE BREON JAXON

DAVAE BREON JAXON, A MASTER WIZARD AND COLLECTOR OF EXOTIC LORE, WAS APPRENTICED TO THE INFAMOUS MORDENKANE IN THE GREAT CITY OF TAL'NAVASHAR IN THE EAST.

AS SOON AS HE WAS ABLE, JAXON SET OUT INTO THE WORLD IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURE, SPENDING MORE THAN THREE DECADES TRAVELING THE ROADS AND WILD LANDS OF ANDÜN AND GREATER ARDA. DURING HIS WANDERINGS, HE MANAGED TO AMASS A VAST AMOUNT OF MAGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND AN EXTRAORDINARY NUMBER OF BOOKS. IN HIS LATTER YEARS, JAXON ESTABLISHED THE LARGEST AND MOST RESPECTED LIBRARY DEDICATED TO THE ARCANE ARTS THE WORLD HAD EVER SEEN.

DAVAE BREON JAXON HAS RECENTLY TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO THE INSTRUCTION OF ADVENTURERS IN THE FINE ART OF SURVIVAL IN EXTREME ENVIRONMENTS, AND THIS BOOK HAS BENEFITTED GREATLY FROM HIS EXPERIENCE.

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