

# NOW THERE IS ONLY ICE.

**The Sun**, weak and heartless hangs dim in the daytime sky. A once proud star has shed its heat and its light leaving indigenous and alien ruin buried under endless tons of ice. The surface of this water-bound orb has turned amaranthine white and as hard as stone.

Only the most tenacious of *things* still survive out on the exterior. There is no moon to brighten the bitter night, perhaps it flung itself into the inky darkness of space. With no source of light the nights are aphotic and terrible. With sunset comes such a penetrating cold that it can freeze one solid before he can even take a breath. Some say that just the winds can cut an unlucky wanderer in half. If those things do not kill you then the animals will.

Cerberus Wyrms and the Ur Bears are kings of the ice, but there are other creatures both above and below in the tunnels that are too numerous to list here. There are rumors of sapient and alien cultures that live out there on the surface ice but the rational do not believe such a thing is possible.

There are those that venture out onto the surface to explore and salvage in the sparse ruins that were left behind. Some return with precious metals, stone, and dirt. Some return with artifacts of unknown purpose, still others have come back gibbering with madness.

At its warmest the surface is literally bone chilling. I dare say it may be impossible to measure how cold it gets during the winter. Many have left for the surface and have never found their way home again.

We survive, though, as our kind always has. Warmed by heat drawn up from an immeasurable deepness through The Pipe. This massive network of conduits was here long before our kind came here and will likely remain here after we have frozen to death. No one can say for certain how far this series of ever branching pipework extends, but we uncover more of it every day. Just as some days we lose some. As insane as it sounds the pipe seems to move on its own.

There are vast caverns cradled along these massive lengths of pipe. In some of these caverns we collect the rare earth that pushes it's way through over the years, in others we make our homes and places of work.

We tap into the pipe as if it were made for us to do so, using the pressure, heat and steam to drive our thermobaric engines and keep us warm down here. We are provided light, pale and blue, by the indigenous phosphorescent bacteria that inhabit the surfaces near pipe outlets.

## CLICHES

**Dwellers On The Ice** are those brave fools that make a life for themselves on the surface of this barren ball of ice. They occasionally trade in metals for food with those below the surface.

**Prospectors** use powerful Magneto-mechanical tools to find resources buried under the layers of ice. Typically prospectors search for metals and dirt to use for tools and growing food, other times they follow the pipe looking for new caverns.

**Farmers & Hunters** are those that create or gather the resources we use for our daily living, whether those resources are Food, Drinkable water or even Oxygen itself.

**Expeditioners/Wayfinders** venture to explore past the known to find other places and possibly artifacts of a previous age or even just better resources for our people.

**Mechanics/Engineers** are those trained in the creation and use of the Thermobaric and Magneto-Mechanical devices we use in our daily struggles to survive.

## TOOLS

**Thermal Lance:** Can be used as both a tool for melting ice and as a weapon, commonly plugged straight into the pipe, but can be made portable with the use of Hyborbaric Jars.

**Macrotransducer:** Common tool used by Prospectors to find things buried in the ice, can detect multiple wave patterns and signatures.

**Wayfinder Boots:** Used to facilitate travel by foot by cycling through warming and freezing the ice under foot to help maintain steady traction. Also comes in a glove format for climbing.

**Hyborbaric Jars:** Used as short term batteries when away from the pipe.

**Collocation Tubes:** Allow for expeditious travel between caverns using pressure and steam as motive force.

## ECHOES

**Winters Wolves** (The Sword), **Ice Breaker** (Skinny Puppy), **The Snow** (Coil), **Cold Comfort** (Haujobb), **Die In Winter** (Wumpscut)

A Risus one page challenge by Ryan Northcott

## PLOTS

**The Thing:** Something alien and strange is found frozen in the ice.

**Cliffhanger:** A rescue attempt goes wrong when subversive elements hamper the search for their own gain.

**Arctic Blue:** The players are tasked with returning a dangerous criminal from a remote settlement back to civilization.

**Whiteout:** An enforcer must find a killer out on the ice before the sun sets for winter.

**30 Days of Night:** A remote settlement is set upon by blood-thirsty creatures.

**Frozen:** Faced with freezing to death after being stranded, the party must make some drastic decisions.

## UNDER THE ICE

It is quite possible to come across anything buried in the ice, from the abundant life that once roamed the seas here to things that had traveled across the ocean of stars to become trapped by the inhuman cold.

**Ur-Bears:** (Bear 10, Find Food 6) Massive animals, left over from some previous age, seem to exist only to eat whatever living thing they can find, luckily they are only found on the exterior. An Ur-Bears claws which can grow to the length of a man provide an excellent source of iron and copper.

**Cerberus Wyrms:** (Hunt in Pack 4, Infest 4, Seek Warmth 2) burrow into the ice to hibernate, but are roused near any source of heat they nears them. The lucky are simply devoured, the unlucky are infested by the spirit of the wyrm and turned into Wyrm Slaves.

**Wyrm Slave:** (Savagery 6, Servant of Wyrms 4) Our former brothers and sisters turned into hideous monstrosities under the sway of an alien thing infesting their bodies and brains. Sadly there is no way to cure them. In the end, they only serve as hatching chambers, birthing hundreds of wyrms at a time.

**Bizarre Machine:** (Understand Language 2, Rationalize Violence 4, Work 4) Come in an ever surprising variety of forms, sizes and uses. Rare are those able to coexist with the living, most are prone to erratic behavior and violence.