

The Thaw

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<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Andrewsarchus_DB.jpg>.

Description and Cast

Millions of years ago, during the ice age, a neanderthal shaman tried to use a necromantic ritual to save himself and his tribe from an icy death by embracing the cold rather than fighting it. His spell did not work as planned, and he and his tribe, plus many nearby ice age animals, were encased in a glacier. They did not die, but they were trapped within the ice. Recently, the block of ice that held them broke off the glacier and became an iceberg, floating southward along the coast and slowly thawing, releasing zombified animals that have not walked the planet in ages. The shaman is able to control them through the effects of the ritual, and is close to being released from the melting ice himself. Driven mad by being trapped in the ice, fully aware but unable to move, and corrupted by the necromantic energies of the ritual, he is thoroughly evil and seeks to destroy all life.

- Thawed Shaman and ice-zombie neanderthal tribe
- Ice-zombie Ice Age animals such as saber-toothed tigers, mammoths, short-faced bears, etc.
- Secondary ice-zombies created from those villagers killed by the animals
- Unsuspecting coastal fishing villages

Stakes

- Will the PCs figure out the source of the attacks and find a way to stop them?
- Can the PCs save the fishing villages in the path of the iceberg?
- Will the iceberg melt completely and free all those trapped within?

Dangers

The Thawing Iceberg

Grim Portents

- A fog rolls in off the sea, chilling people to their very souls.
- Ice-zombie animals attack the village under cover of the mist.
- The mist retreats as the iceberg continues to float down the coast, and the animals go with it.
- The villagers killed by the animal attacks rise as ice-zombies themselves
- Eventually, the iceberg floats into a village harbor and breaks apart, releasing all remaining inside and dooming the town to a frozen death.

Impending Doom: Destruction

Locations

The First Village

- **Smell:** Coastal breeze that brings with it the smell of the sea, mixed with the smell of blood
- **Sight:** Small shacks with snowy roofs, muddy roads with melting snow a foot deep in untraveled areas, a pub and inn named the Beckoning Mermaid, a rickety-looking dock with several fishing boats, a temple to the God of the Sea
- **Sound:** Screams and cries for help coming from both the pub/inn and the temple.
- **Occupants:** The villagers who survived the attacks the night before are now being terrorized by those who did not survive and have now risen as ice-zombies. The PCs may split up or they may stay together and choose 1 of the 2 locations. If they choose the temple, the head priest is keeping several ice-zombies at bay with his holy symbol. The zombies will attack the PCs as soon as they see them. If the PCs head for the Beckoning Mermaid, several villagers are trapped in the kitchen while the owner of the place, Hrothgar Nornson (a big, burly man who is a retired sailor) tries to keep the ice-zombies in the dining area at bay with a sword. The zombies will turn and attack any PCs that enter the inn.

Clues:

- Surviving villagers can tell the PCs what happened the night before, but none saw the creatures that attacked and lived to tell the tale.
- Footprints in the snow are very large, but related to various animals like tigers, bears, and wolves.
- The animals seemed to come from the sea northwest of town, worked together as a group, and retreated southwest toward the sea again. A thick, cold mist also came from the sea.
- The zombie villagers have terrible wounds on their bodies, indicative of animal attacks, but the wounds are also blackened with frostbite and the blood is frozen.
- The next village is a day's ride to the south.

The Second Village

- **Smell:** Death and decay plus the salty sea air.
- **Sight:** A wall of extremely thick fog, dense enough that the village can hardly be seen at all.
- **Sound:** Muffled screams in the fog quickly cut short with a choking gurgle, occasional deep growls, a crash or sounds of something breaking
- **Occupants:** There are several ice-zombie animals hunting in the mists, including saber-toothed tigers, a giant sloth, several short-faced bears, and an Andrewsarcus. If any of the zombies are killed, the shaman will send a zombie neanderthal riding a zombie woolly mammoth to aid in their escape and kill the interlopers. Most of the villagers are still alive when the PCs arrive, some don't even know anything strange is happening yet besides the soul-freezing fog.

When you enter the soul-chilling fog, roll + Con. If you roll 10+, you are unaffected. If you roll 7-9, take a -1 forward until you warm up somehow, such as a vigorous round of combat or a large fire. On a 6-, you suffer a -1 ongoing throughout the night until the fog retreats with the dawn.

Clues:

- These animals are like nothing living today, and they have been relatively well-preserved, but are clearly not alive. Some are missing limbs, chunks of flesh, eyes, etc. All show signs of severe frostbite.

- Once again, they seem to have come from the direction of the sea, and any that were not destroyed retreated that way too.
- The neanderthal is clearly not human, but looks like a relative of humans.
- All of the animals seemed to be working together, and quite intelligently.
- The next village down the coast sits at the end of a long peninsula that juts into the sea, and is less than a day's ride to the southwest.

At this point, the PCs have 2 main choices: They can try to head out by ship to intercept whatever is sending out these attacks, or race to the next village.

The Thawing Iceberg (Final Act, option 1)

- **Smell:** Something old, dead, and decayed.
- **Sight:** A wall of thick fog, cloaking a massive iceberg with multiple dark shapes within it.
- **Sound:** The lapping of waves, the occasional shattering of ice and the sound of something large falling into the sea.
- **Occupants:** More ice-zombie animals as well as the zombie neanderthal tribe and their shaman. The characters should face several different foes along the way, from a saber-toothed tiger jumping into their boat while neanderthal zombies hurl spears from above till the climatic final battle against the shaman and the remains of his tribe deep in a cave within the iceberg. If the shaman is killed, the necromantic energy that is released blows the entire top off of the iceberg and all the remaining zombies collapse, lifeless.

Remember that when you enter the soul-chilling fog that surrounds the iceberg, you must roll + Con (see results above).

The Third Village (Final Act, option 2)

- **Smell:** Death and decay plus the salty sea air.
- **Sight:** A terrified fishing village with a small lighthouse and fort stretched along a narrow piece of land jutting into the sea, pointing at a wall of dense fog rolling in from the sea with a huge shape slightly visible within the fog.
- **Sound:** A sound like thunder followed by loud splashes as the iceberg enters the shallow bay and large chunks break off, freeing the creatures within
- **Occupants:** The remaining ice-zombie animals and the shaman and his undead tribe will come ashore in this town, and the meager town watch plus the villagers will not be enough to stop them without the help of the PCs! The captain of the watch is in the fort, and he is trying to get the villagers inside so he can shut the doors, but they won't hold long against the might of a zombie mammoth or the rending claws of a giant sloth.

Remember that when you enter the soul-chilling fog that surrounds the iceberg, you must roll + Con (see results above).

For the villagers that rise as frozen zombies, use the Draugr stats in the Dungeon World core book, page 257.

Because these Ice-Zombies have been frozen for so long they have a fire vulnerability. This means any fire damage they suffer should be rolled twice and the better result used. Large fires may be used to keep them at bay or chase them off.

Monsters

Ice-Zombie Saber-toothed Tiger

Group

Bite (b[2d8], 2 piercing), 12 HP, 2 Armor

Close, Messy

Special Qualities: Icy touch, Undead, Fire vulnerability

Instinct: Kill the living

- Freeze flesh, those it kills return as Draugr
- Pounce at a target, knocking them down as it bites and claws them

Ice-Zombie Mammoth

Solitary, Huge

Tusks (b[2d10]+2), 20 HP, 2 Armor

Close, Reach, Forceful

Special Qualities: Icy touch, Undead, Fire vulnerability

Instinct: Kill the living

- Freeze flesh, those it kills return as Draugr
- Charge, smashing all in its path!
- Grab a target with its trunk, grappling them

Ice-Zombie Giant Sloth

Solitary, Large

Claws (d10+1, 2 piercing), 14 HP, 2 Armor

Close, Messy, Forceful

Special Qualities: Icy touch, Undead, Fire vulnerability

Instinct: Kill the living

- Freeze flesh, those it kills return as Draugr
- Rending claws destroy a shield or armor

Ice-Zombie Woolly Rhino

Solitary, Large

Horn (d10+2, 2 piercing), 18 HP, 2 Armor

Close, Messy, Forceful

Special Qualities: Icy touch, Undead, Fire vulnerability

Instinct: Kill the living

- Freeze flesh, those it kills return as Draugr
- Charge, smashing all in its path!

Ice-Zombie Andrewsarcus

Solitary, Large

Bite (d8+3, 3 piercing), 16 HP, 2 Armor

Close, Messy

Special Qualities: Icy touch, Undead, Fire vulnerability

Instinct: Kill the living

- Freeze flesh, those it kills return as Draugr
- Powerful jaws can bite through almost anything!

Ice-Zombie Short-faced Bear and Cave Bear

Solitary, Large

Bite (d8+2, 1 piercing), 15 HP, 2 Armor

Close, Messy

Special Qualities: Icy touch, Undead, Fire vulnerability

Instinct: Kill the living

- Freeze flesh, those it kills return as Draugr
- Crushing hypothermic bear-hug!
- Rise up on hind legs and slash with both claws (b[2d6]+2, 1 piercing)

Ice-Zombie Giant Elk

Solitary, Large

Antlers (d8+1, 1 piercing), 14 HP, 2 Armor

Close, Forceful

Special Qualities: Icy touch, Undead, Fire vulnerability

Instinct: Kill the living

- Freeze flesh, those it kills return as Draugr
- Toss his target through the air with a flick of his antlers

Ice-Zombie Glyptodont

Solitary, Large

Tail swat (d6+1), 14 HP, 3 Armor

Close, Forceful

Special Qualities: Icy touch, Undead, Fire vulnerability

Instinct: Kill the living

- Freeze flesh, those it kills return as Draugr

Ice-Zombie Neanderthals

Group, Organized

Spears (d6+2), 9 HP, 2 Armor

Reach, Thrown, Near

Special Qualities: Icy touch, Undead, Fire vulnerability

Instinct: Kill the living

- Hurl spears at enemies. If they use weapons, those they kill don't rise as Draugr.
- Use hunting tactics to lure prey into traps and ambushes

Ice-Zombie Neanderthal Shaman

Solitary

Ice bolts (d10+1, 1 piercing), 15 HP, 2 Armor

Reach, Near, Far

Special Qualities: Icy touch, Undead, Fire vulnerability

Instinct: Kill the living

- Cast spells of death and ice.
- Command other Ice-Zombies telepathically
- Create soul-chilling fog