

Horrors Beneath the Ice

IN AN APPARENT UPHEAVAL OF NATURAL hibernation cycles, there are some threats that only appear during the bitter cold of winter. Whether they migrate with the cold, lay dormant during warm months, or cross over from another plane of existence, these creatures of the cold only menace travelers and other isolated folk when the weather is freezing.

Three such threats are offered here. All have one thing in common; they are hidden threats, creatures who hide in the obscuring ice and snow until their unsuspecting prey gets too close. It is then that they spring their traps, engulfing and destroying their victims when it is too late to resist. Only the hardest adventurers survive such encounters.



WRITING WALT CIECHANOWSKI
COLOR ART PHIL STONE
EDITING JAMES J. HAECK
LAYOUT ERIC LIFE-PUTNAM

Black Icer

Large ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 95 (10d10 + 40)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	6 (–2)	18 (+4)	1 (–5)	6 (–2)	1 (–5)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities cold

Damage Vulnerabilities acid, fire

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Amorphous. The black icer can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Slick Surface. Black icers have extremely slick surfaces when hardened. Any creature stepping on a black icer must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or slip and fall on top of the black icer. The black icer may engulf the creature as a reaction.

Transparent. Black icers are difficult to see when on a smooth surface and even when they settle into a patch of “ice” on natural ground they look no different than regular ice. Even when in plain sight, it takes a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot a black icer that has neither moved nor attacked. A creature that tries to enter the black icer’s space while unaware of the black icer is surprised by the black icer.

ACTIONS

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) cold damage.

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Engulf. The black icer moves up to its speed. While doing so, it can enter Large or smaller creatures’ spaces. Whenever the black icer enters a creature’s space, the creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature does not slip and may enter the nearest 5-foot space outside of the black icer’s spaces. On a failed save, the creature takes 10 (3d6) cold damage and is engulfed.

The engulfed creature can’t breathe, is restrained, and takes 21 (6d6) cold damage at the start of each of the black icer’s turns. The black icer cannot move while it has engulfed a creature (although it may attack others with its pseudopods) and it can only engulf one creature at a time.

An engulfed creature can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 16 Strength check. On a success, the creature escapes and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the black icer.

The precise origin of the black icer is unclear. The generally accepted explanation is that it is an ooze that has adapted to the cold and that only enters civilized areas when the weather is cold enough, but the fact that it thrives in civilized conditions (black ice requires smooth surfaces) steers academics towards a more exotic solution. Some believe it is an alchemical experiment gone wrong, while others believe that it is a denizen of an outer plane that slipped into this dimension. In any case, the black icer does seem to behave like any other ooze, lulling victims into a false sense of security in order to trap them and feed.

Snow Angel

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)

Speed 10 ft. (30 ft in deep snow), swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +7

Damage Immunities cold

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Amphibious. The snow angel can breathe air and water.

Camouflage. When covered by snow, the snow angel appears to be an actual “snow angel” that was created by someone laying in the snow and waving their hands and feet. The snow angel usually adds some seemingly valuable trinket—usually from a previous victim—in the center of the snow angel, as if it was accidentally left behind. It takes a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice that something is a bit “off” about the snow angel imprint or to spot the small hole that the snow angel is breathing through.

Pass without Trace. Snow angels have the ability to slither through snow without leaving any traces of their movements. Thus, the movements of a snow angel can only be tracked by magical means. They receive a +10 bonus to Dexterity (Stealth) checks when moving around other creatures if there is at least half a foot of snow on the ground.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The snow angel can make three attacks with its tentacles or two attacks with its tentacles and one with its bite.

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 15 feet., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d8+3) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the snow angel can’t use the tentacle on another target. It may, however, bludgeon a grappled creature with another tentacle.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 feet, one target. *Hit:* 36 (6d10+3) piercing damage. The snow angel prefers to bite creatures it has grappled, although it also bites those who step on it while it’s hidden.



The snow angel is a strange and disturbing creature—an invertebrate hexapod that buries itself in the snow and attracts the curious with playful indentations in the snow and the promise of a reward. This large creature originated in the coldest depths of the ocean, adapting to life on land in the coldest regions where it learned to use snow as a mode of transport as well as camouflage.

While not particularly intelligent, the snow angel has a shrewd animal cunning and has learned to save the shiny things it comes across on its feedings and travels to entice curious wanderers in the snow. While this often attracts the most vulnerable members of a rural community, snow angels who settle too close to such places often end up trapping dogs and domesticated animals, hopefully providing much needed clues to local authorities that something dangerous is lurking nearby.

Wailer on the Ice

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (16 in icy terrain)

Hit Points 102 (12d8 + 48)

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +9, Intimidation +6

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks.

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses blindsight 120 ft.

Languages any it knew in life

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Ethereal Sight. The wailer on the ice can see 120 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Frigid Armor. The wailer on the ice coats itself in a thick barrier of ice while it is in direct contact with solid ice, increasing its AC to 16.

Incorporeal Movement. The wailer on the ice can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object. The wailer on the ice cannot use this feature while body of ice is active.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wailer on the ice makes two slam attacks or ice weapon attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 21 (5d6 + 4) force damage plus 7 (2d6) cold damage. In addition, the target may be knocked prone if it fails a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. If the target fails and is standing on ice, the ice in its space breaks.

Ice Weapon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 26 (5d8 + 4) bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (the wailer on the ice chooses what type of weapon to manifest and uses the appropriate damage type), plus 7 (2d6) cold damage.



Cone of Frost (Recharge 4–6). The wailer on the ice blows a 30-foot cone of frost. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 36 (8d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Etherealness. The wailer on the ice enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

Wail. The wailer on the ice cries out for help, like a lost soul upon the ice. Any creature within 300 feet can hear this wail and it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be compelled to move towards the wailer on the ice. The effect ends when the creature takes damage or when it gets within 5 feet of the wailer on the ice.

The wailer on the ice is not a ghost or spirit, but a painful echo, a manifestation of the despair of a frozen humanoid whose dying screams went unheard. This ethereal remnant uses the ice that formed over its frost-blackened mummy to create an icy facsimile of its original appearance. It is a tortured beacon of despair; it believes—inasmuch as an ethereal remnant can believe—that by luring and killing others it may dull its own pain. Unfortunately, the wailer can never truly know peace; every victim the wailer on the ice lures to its death only magnifies its suffering.

Fortunately, wailers on the ice can only exist in freezing conditions. When the thaw comes, the wailers disappear, only to return when the snows do. Over time, this can give an area a sinister reputation that doesn't manifest itself throughout the warmer parts of the year. 🧊