

At this moment, watching little puffs of breath condense into crystals of ice inches above my nose, I am very much questioning the value of an experience. If you give up halfway through an attempt at something, something that seemed very cool in concept and yet absurdly cold in reality, does it entirely overshadow the effort? Can you still brag about it later? I mean, come on. I've given it two hours. I have pictures. Is that wet reindeer I'm smelling?

Here's your snapshot: I am fully clothed, wearing long johns, jeans, a T-shirt, wool socks, and a silly Nordic hat with strings that dangle over my ears Pippi Longstocking-style. Around me is a sheet cocoon that opens only at one end, and on top of that a cold weather sleeping bag zipped to my chin. Only my face is exposed, staring up at a ceiling made of ice. Around me, walls of ice. Under me, a huge slab of ice covered in reindeer skins that, by their gamey funk, don't seem to have been fumigated.

