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see how we lived

Prehistoric mammals and birds



 Orpheus

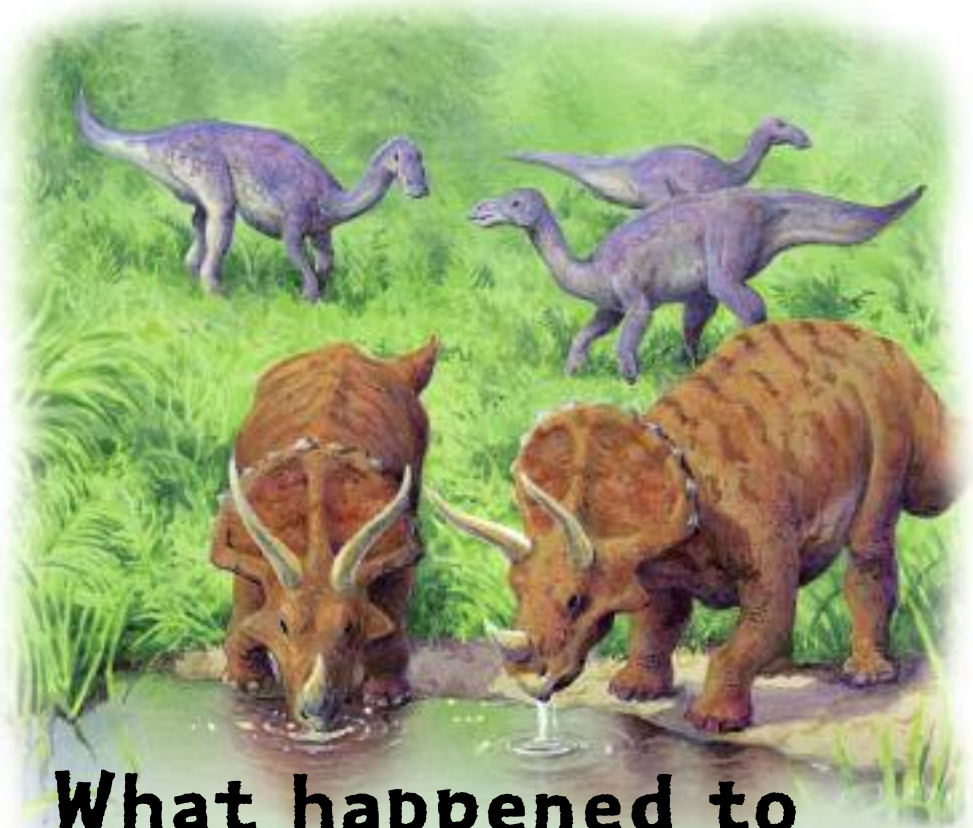
Contents

What happened to the dinosaurs?	6
Who came after the dinosaurs?	12
Who lived during the Ice Age?	18
How did the first humans live?	24



Prehistoric mammals and birds

Mammoths, sabre-tooths, giant horse-eating birds ... all of us lived after the Age of Dinosaurs came to an end. Here you can read about our lives. Find out, too, about other animals that lived in the wild through the long, cold winters of the Ice Age: your human ancestors.



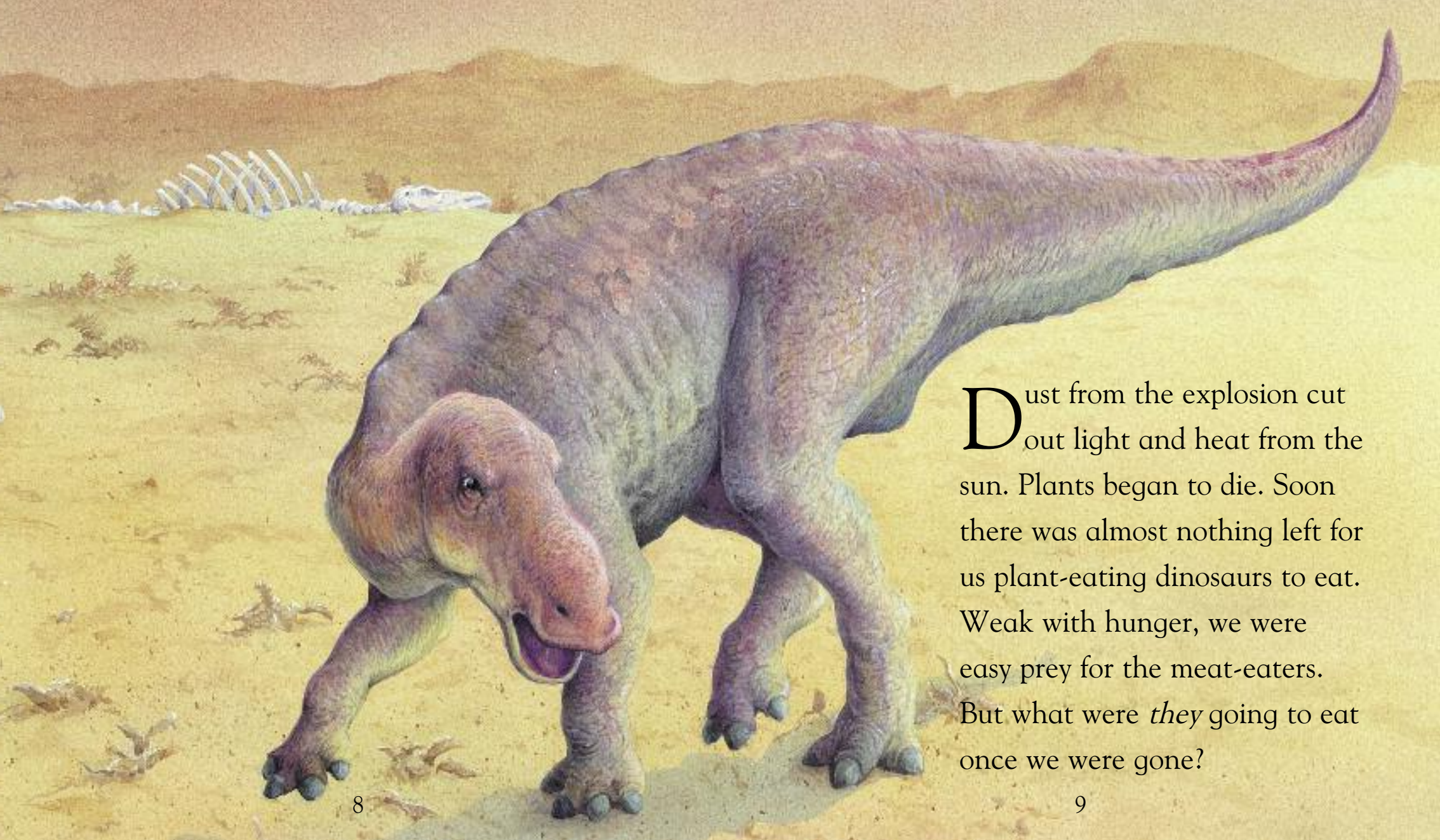
What happened to the dinosaurs?

There are no dinosaurs living on Earth today. About 65 millions years ago, they all died out. No one knows why for certain.

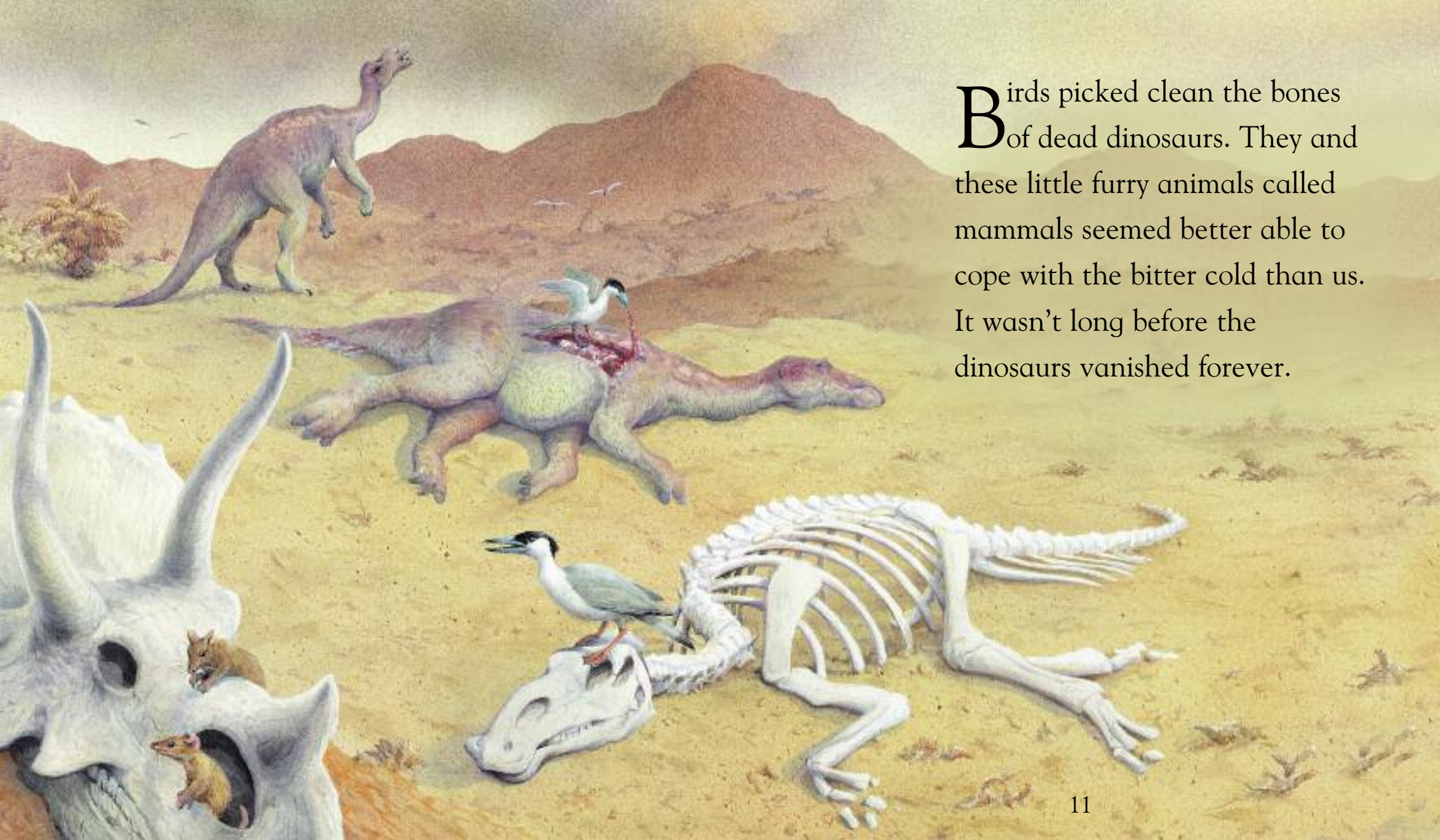
Perhaps this is what happened. One day, a brilliant streak of light raced across the sky.

Moments later there was huge explosion. Something had struck Earth.





Dust from the explosion cut out light and heat from the sun. Plants began to die. Soon there was almost nothing left for us plant-eating dinosaurs to eat. Weak with hunger, we were easy prey for the meat-eaters. But what were *they* going to eat once we were gone?



Birds picked clean the bones of dead dinosaurs. They and these little furry animals called mammals seemed better able to cope with the bitter cold than us. It wasn't long before the dinosaurs vanished forever.

Who came after the dinosaurs?

I am a Alphadon, a warm-blooded, furry mammal. We mammals are furry instead of scaly, we give birth to live young and we feed our babies milk.

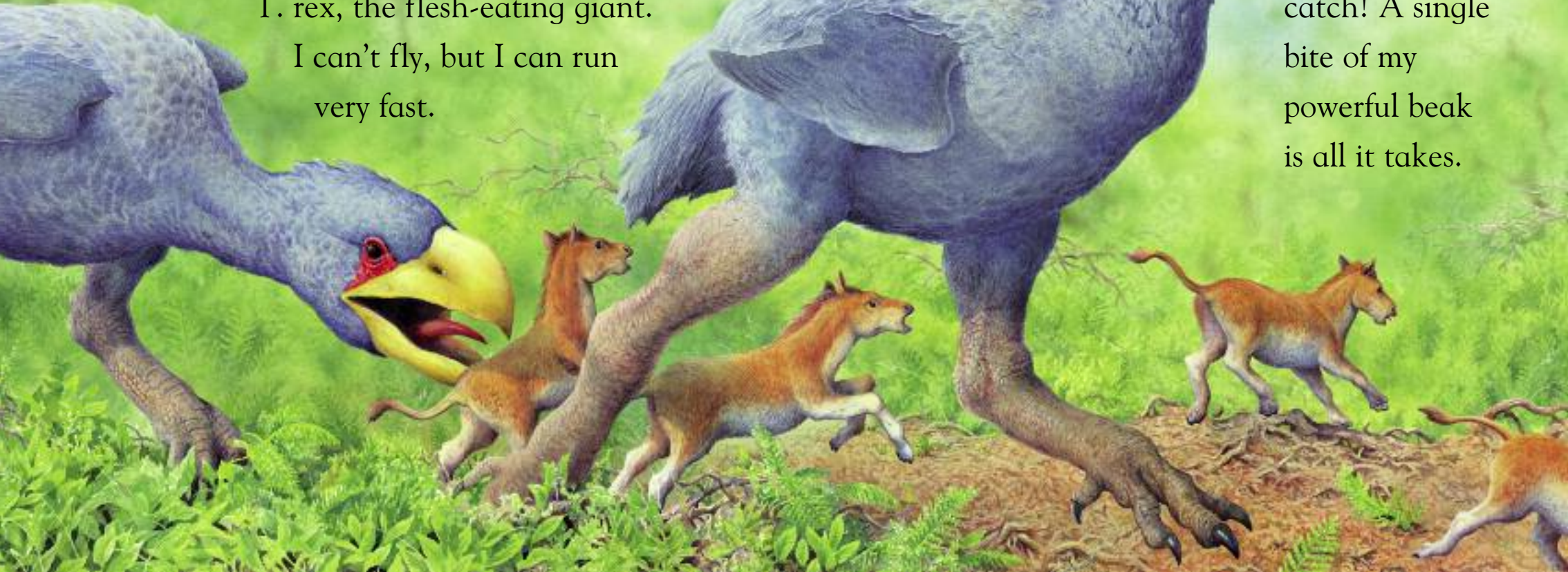
While the dinosaurs were around, we kept well out of the way, coming out to feed only at night. Now that they've gone, you'll find us everywhere. Some of us, like me, are marsupials. Our babies are very tiny when they are born, so we carry them around in a pouch until they can fend for themselves.



Don't forget that we birds also outlived the dinosaurs. (In fact, a type of dinosaur was our ancestor, so you could say that the dinosaurs lived on as birds.) Some of us, like me, Diatryma, are even a bit like

T. rex, the flesh-eating giant.
I can't fly, but I can run
very fast.

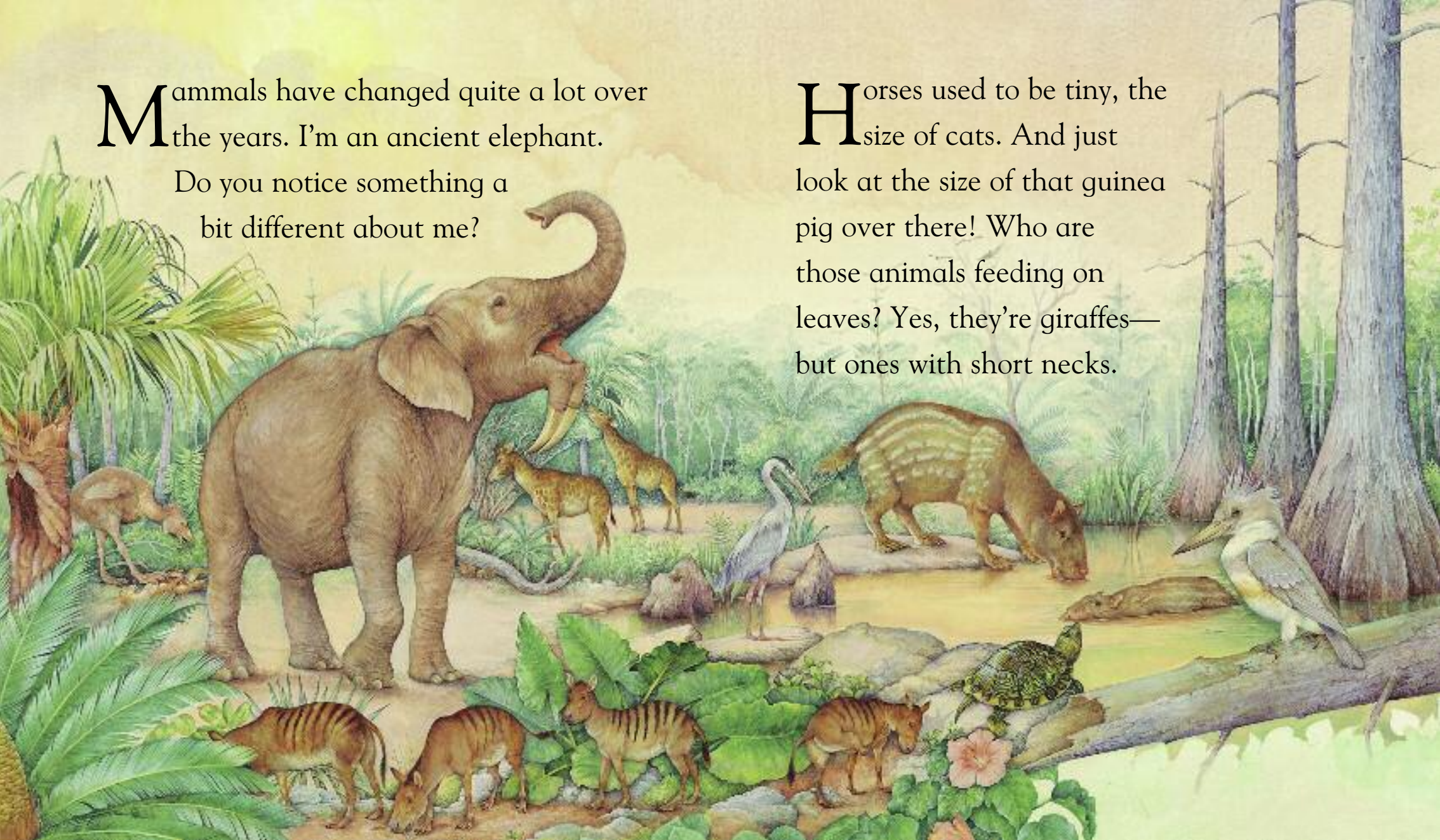
These little horses are my favourite food. They are so easy to catch! A single bite of my powerful beak is all it takes.



Mammals have changed quite a lot over the years. I'm an ancient elephant.

Do you notice something a bit different about me?

Horses used to be tiny, the size of cats. And just look at the size of that guinea pig over there! Who are those animals feeding on leaves? Yes, they're giraffes—but ones with short necks.





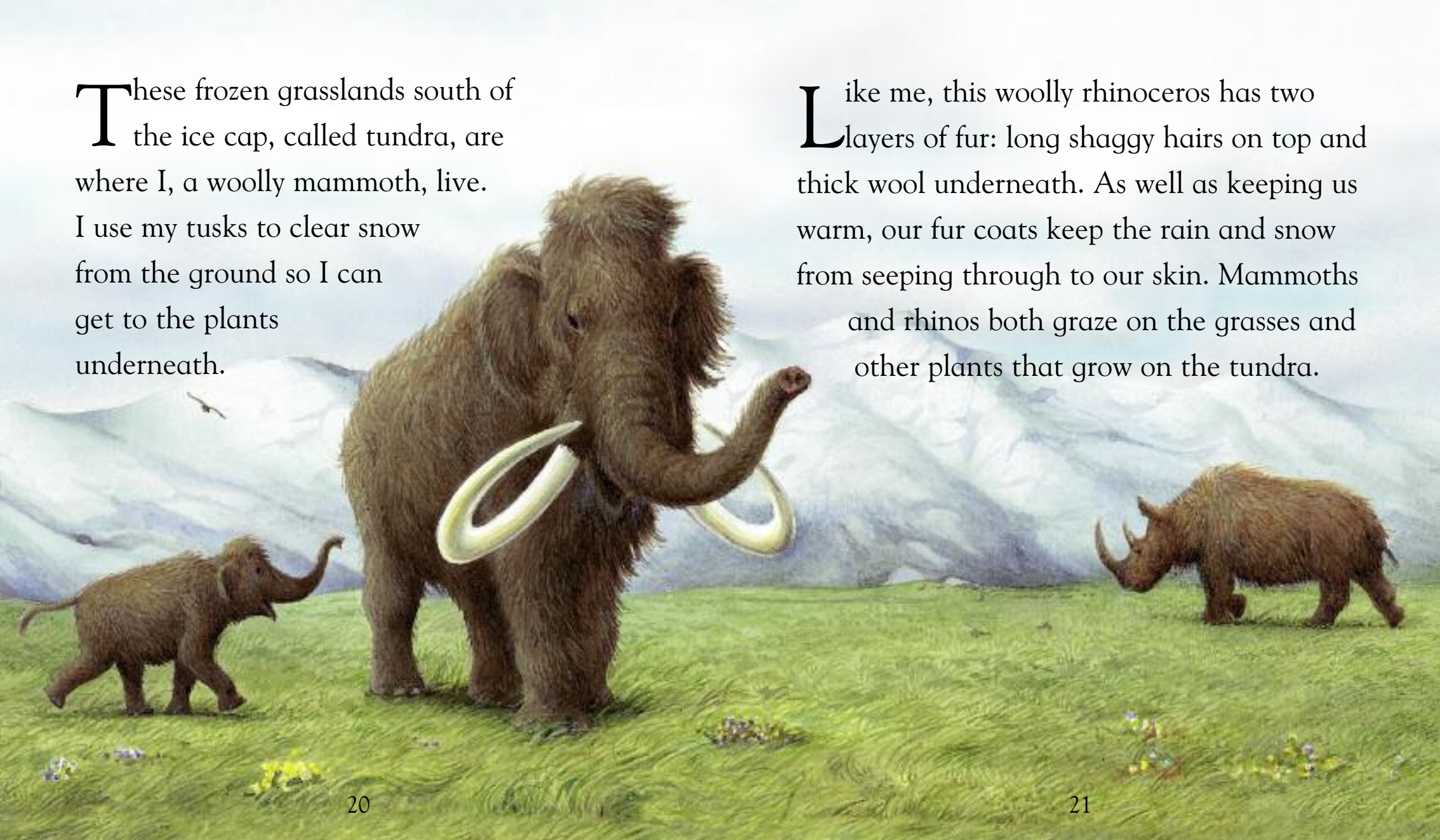
Who lived during the Ice Age?

The world has turned very cold. The ice cap at the north pole has spread southwards. It's too cold for trees to grow here now, and even in the summer the ground is frozen.

I am a leopard, and I was stalking these horses, but some wolves have beaten me to it

These frozen grasslands south of the ice cap, called tundra, are where I, a woolly mammoth, live. I use my tusks to clear snow from the ground so I can get to the plants underneath.

Like me, this woolly rhinoceros has two layers of fur: long shaggy hairs on top and thick wool underneath. As well as keeping us warm, our fur coats keep the rain and snow from seeping through to our skin. Mammoths and rhinos both graze on the grasses and other plants that grow on the tundra.



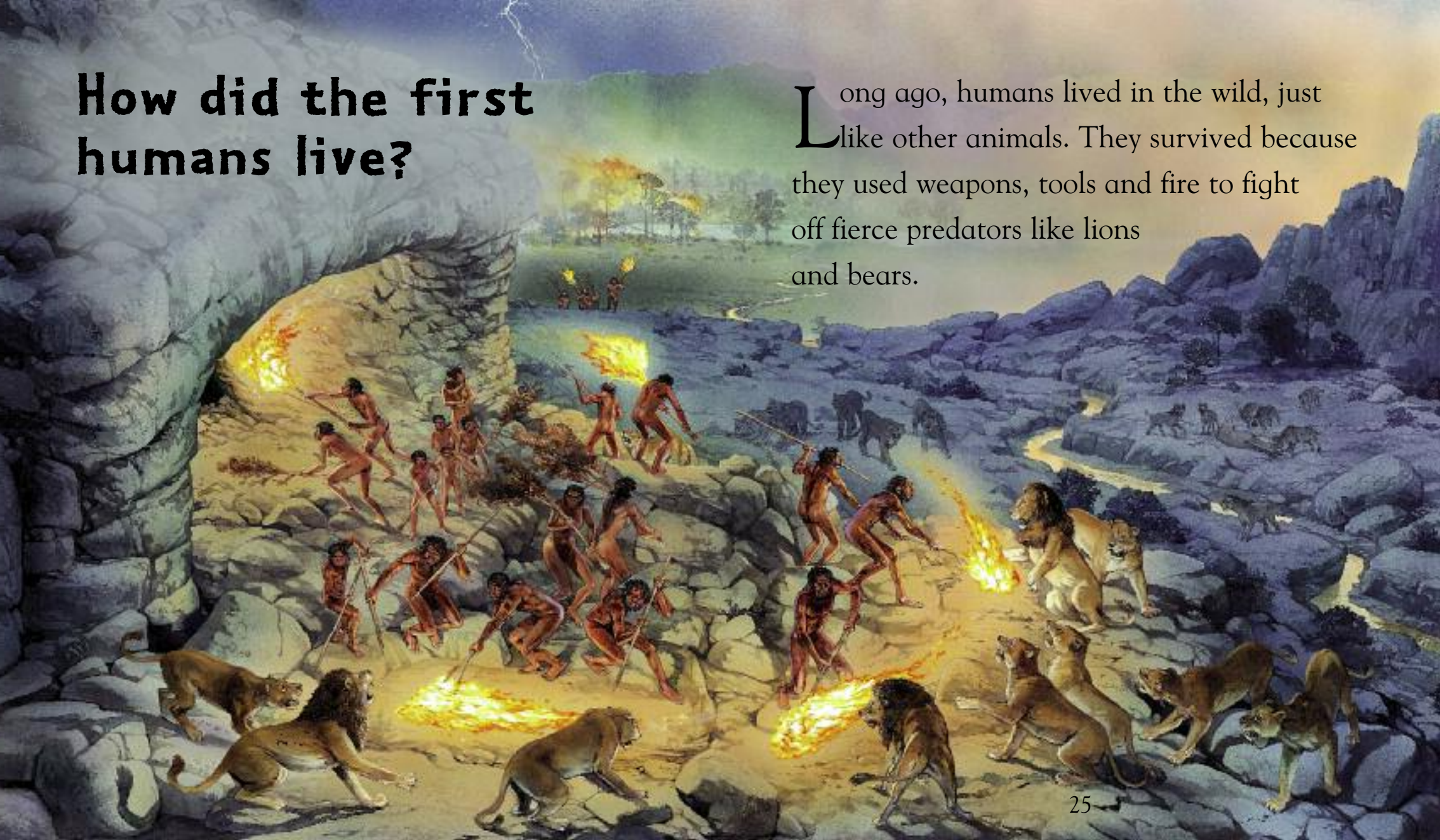
The Ice Age hasn't reached us down here in South America. Those strange grazing beasts, Macrauchenias, don't yet realise that a pack of sabre-toothed tigers are stalking them.

We must be careful to keep downwind of the herd so they don't smell us and run off. Let's find a weak, young or old one to separate from the rest. Easy prey, no?



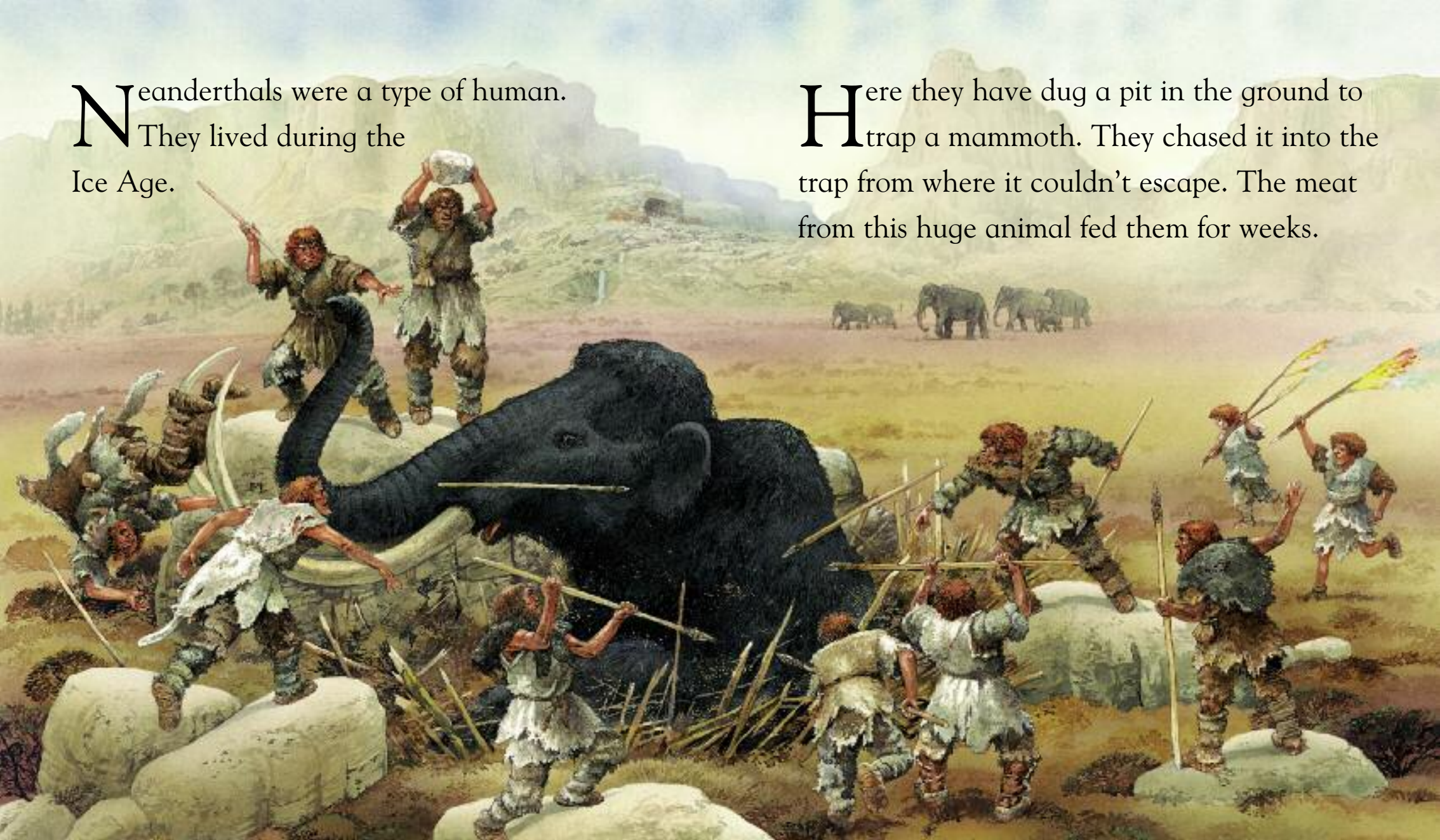
How did the first humans live?

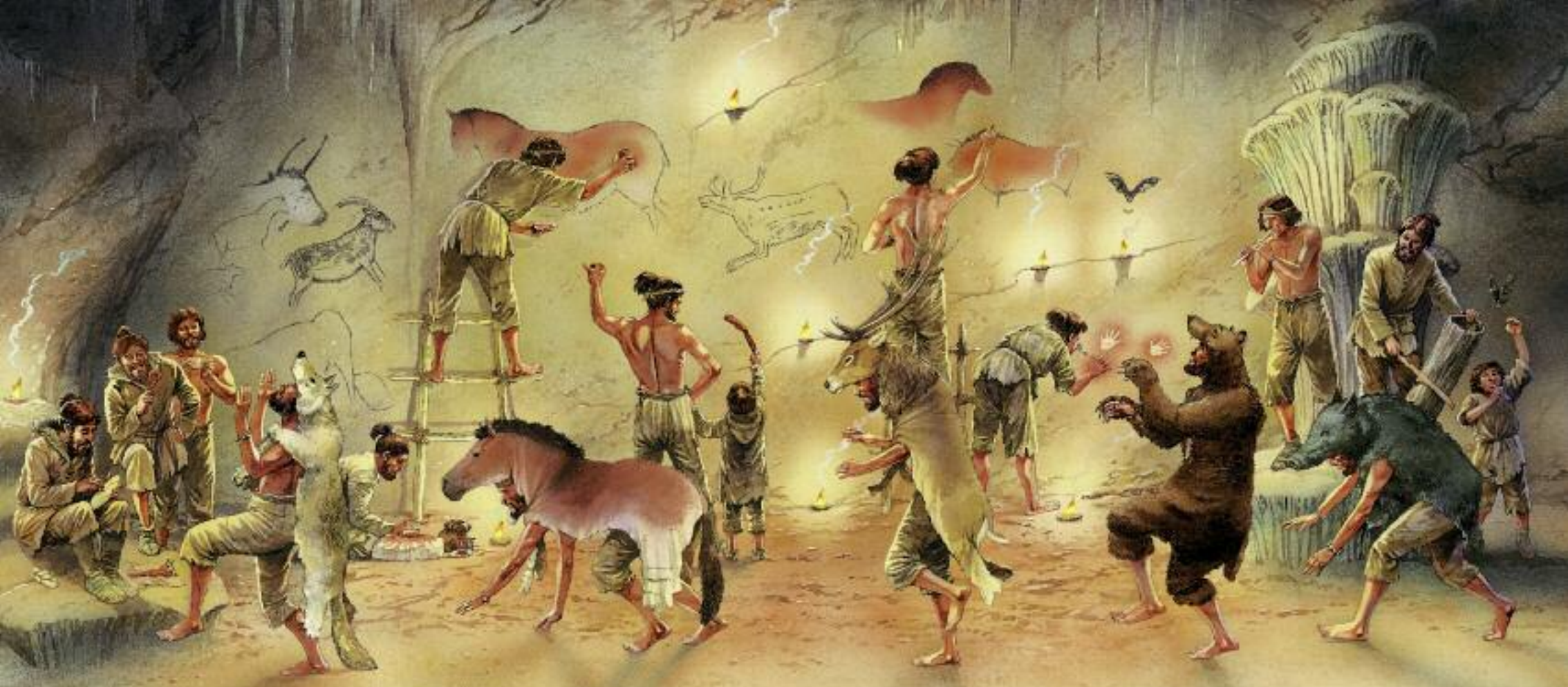
Long ago, humans lived in the wild, just like other animals. They survived because they used weapons, tools and fire to fight off fierce predators like lions and bears.



Neanderthals were a type of human.
They lived during the
Ice Age.

Here they have dug a pit in the ground to
trap a mammoth. They chased it into the
trap from where it couldn't escape. The meat
from this huge animal fed them for weeks.





Now it's 25,000 years ago. Humans paint pictures of the animals they hunt on the walls of this cave.

They make music and dance, too. They hope this will please the animal spirits so that all their hunts will be successful.

