

# AN EARLY GRAVE

25,000 BC

THE BEAR TRIBE HAD LOST ONE OF ITS MEMBERS.

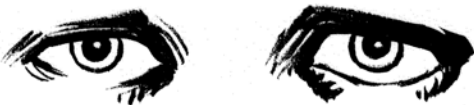
HE WAS BURIED WITH HIS SPEAR AND STONE KNIVES AS BEFITTING A HUNTER. THE CAVE WALLS RANG WITH THE SHAMAN'S DRUMMING AND FUNERAL SONGS.



IT WAS THE SINGING THAT WOKE HIM.

HE HEARD THE SONG OF REMEMBRANCE AND THE GREAT SONG OF DEATH AND REBIRTH AND THE JOURNEY TO THE OTHER WORLD.

IT WAS HIS OWN NAME THEY SANG...



HE OPENED HIS EYES, AND, AS IF FROM A GREAT DISTANCE, SAW HIS TRIBE LEAVING THE CAVE.

HE FOUND HIMSELF IN THE CAVE, STANDING BEFORE A NEWLY-FILLED GRAVE PIT.


HE WAS ABOUT TO FOLLOW THE TRIBE WHEN HE SAW A LIGHT IN THE CAVE'S DEPTHS.





THE LIGHT RECEDED INTO THE EARTH. HE FOLLOWED...

...INTO THE BELLY OF THE MOUNTAIN MOTHER.



THE TUNNEL BECAME NARROWER, UNTIL HE HAD TO CRAWL ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES. IT WAS THIS WAY DURING HIS INITIATION RITE, BEFORE HIS FIRST HUNT, WHEN THE BOYS HAD ENTERED THE CAVE AND EMERGED AS MEN.

BUT UNLIKE THAT LONG AGO JOURNEY, THIS TIME THE DARKNESS AND HEAVY ROCK DIDN'T SEEM TO CRUSH THE AIR FROM HIS LUNGS; INDEED, HE DIDN'T SEEM TO BREATHE AT ALL...

...HE COULD SEE THE CAVE WALLS THROUGH HIS FLESH...

...AND HE FELT NO FEAR.



THE LIGHT GREW BRIGHTER UNTIL IT FILLED THE TUNNEL. IT SURROUNDED HIM...

...AND SUDDENLY HE WAS FALLING THROUGH.



**THUDD**

HE WAS IN THE MOST SACRED PLACE OF ALL: THE CAVE SWARMED WITH THE SHAMEN'S PAINTINGS. BISON, AUROCH, MAMMOTH, ALL DANCED ON THE WALLS OF THE EARTH'S WOMB, SOME PIERCED BY THE HUNTER'S SPEARS TO PROVIDE FOOD AND SKINS FOR THE TWO-LEGGED ONES, OTHERS TO BEAR YOUNG AND FILL THE WORLD WITH BEASTS.



AND ABOVE HIM WAS PAINTED THE LORD OF THE HUNT, THE MAN IN HORNS AND SKINS.

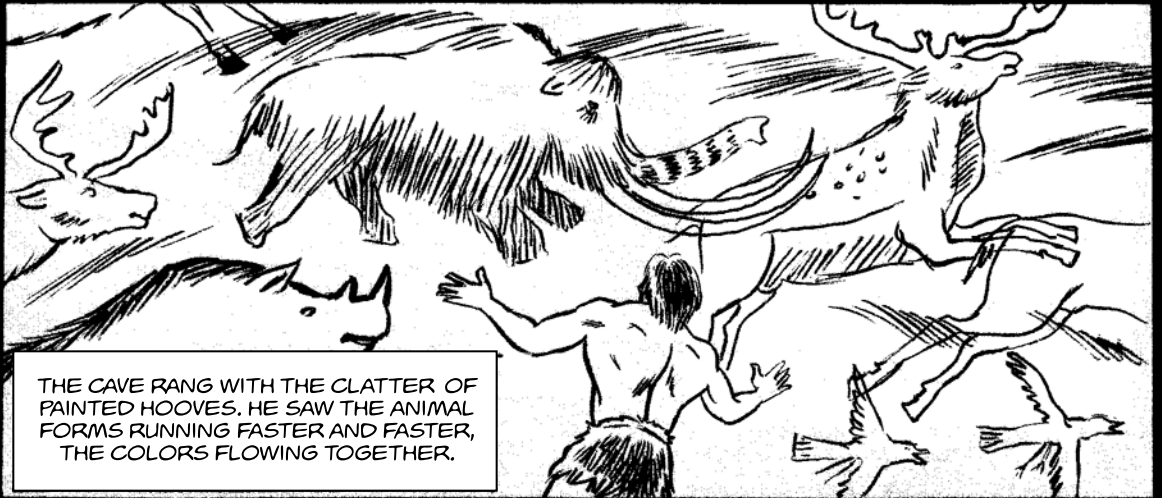


THE EYES OF THE ANIMAL MASTER SEEMED TO STARE BACK AT HIM. HE COULD NOT LOOK AWAY, AND THEN HE DOUBTED HIS OWN EYES, FOR THE PAINTED HOOF/HAND RAISED ITSELF AND POINTED AT HIM...



A RUMBLING SOUND BEGAN AND FILLED THE CAVERN, UNTIL THE WALLS SHOOK.





THE CAVE RANG WITH THE CLATTER OF PAINTED HOOVES. HE SAW THE ANIMAL FORMS RUNNING FASTER AND FASTER, THE COLORS FLOWING TOGETHER.



HE SCREAMED, AND THE SOUND WAS SWALLOWED UP IN THE DIN. HE BEGAN TO RUN...



BEAR AND BISON, ELK AND DEER AND MAN, RAN TOGETHER, BLURRING...



HE RAN UNDER BLUE SKIES AND  
THROUGH DENSE WOODS.



THE TWO-LEGS BROUGHT  
HIM DOWN, STABBING HIM  
AGAIN AND AGAIN.



THE HUNTER HAD  
BECOME THE HUNTED.  
THE TRIBE WOULD EAT  
AND THRIVE.

THE CIRCLE HAD  
CLOSED.

STORY & ART:  
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