

LEVELED BOOKS

Woolly and Fang



Written by Stephen Cosgrove
Illustrated by Philip Newsom

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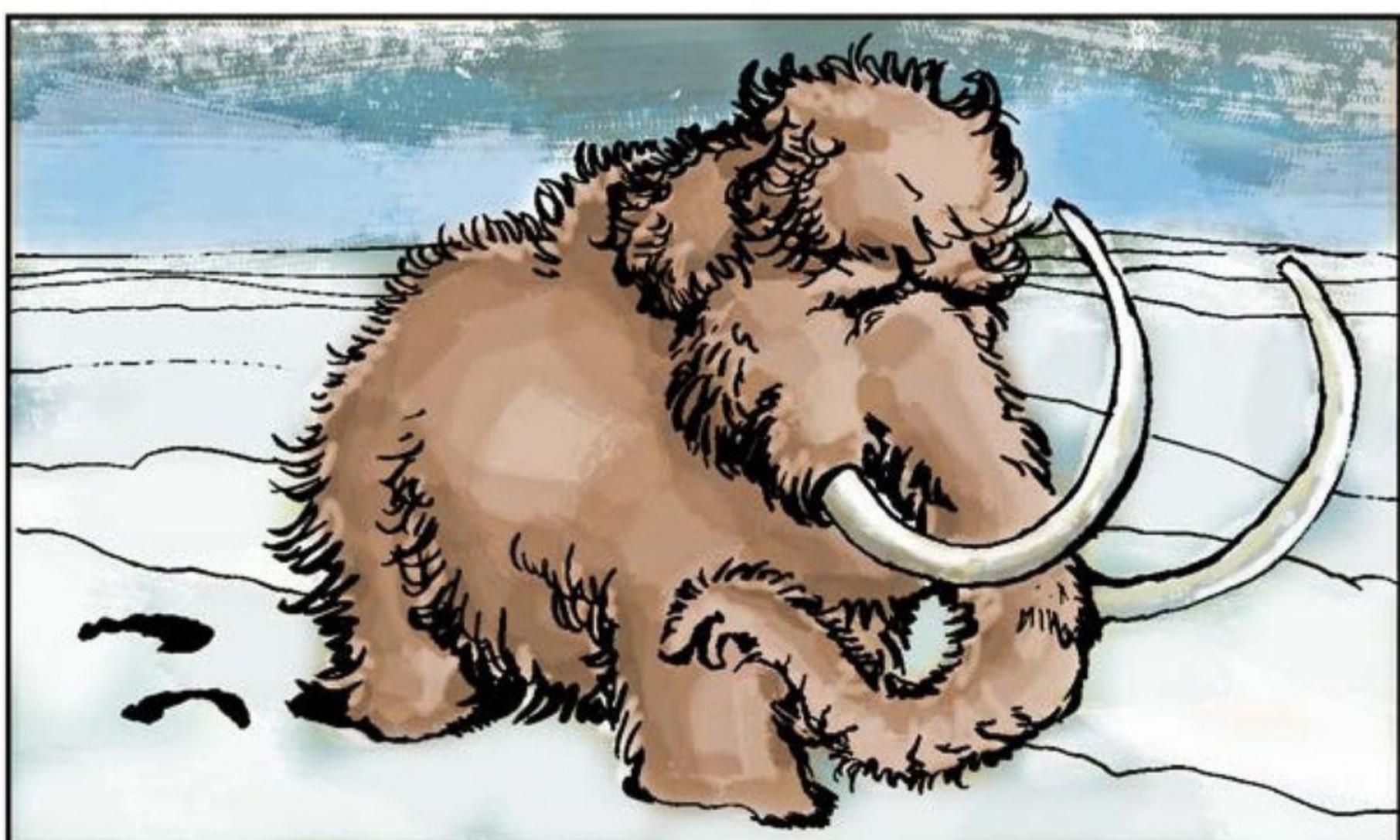
Millions of years ago the earth was always warm.

All creatures, dinosaurs and others, that roamed the earth enjoyed good lives.

And then, the earth became bitterly cold. Lakes and rivers froze solid. The snow began to fall and became so deep that it compacted, turning into massive frozen mountains called glaciers. These glaciers continued to grow and grow, and soon the earth was nearly completely covered in ice.

A winter's chill, like no other, draped the earth in icy wonder. Crystalline snow blanketed the earth. It was like a white rose—beautiful, but with bitterly long, cold thorns. It was the coming of the Ice Age.

The dinosaurs and other creatures were unable to survive the sharp thorns of the Ice Age. But some creatures did survive. There were great bears with thick layers of fat and heavy coats of fur. There were woolly mammoths, elephant-like creatures, covered in long, thick hair. Their tusks were long and curved, well-suited to move chunks of ice and snow as they searched for grasses beneath the frozen snow and ice.



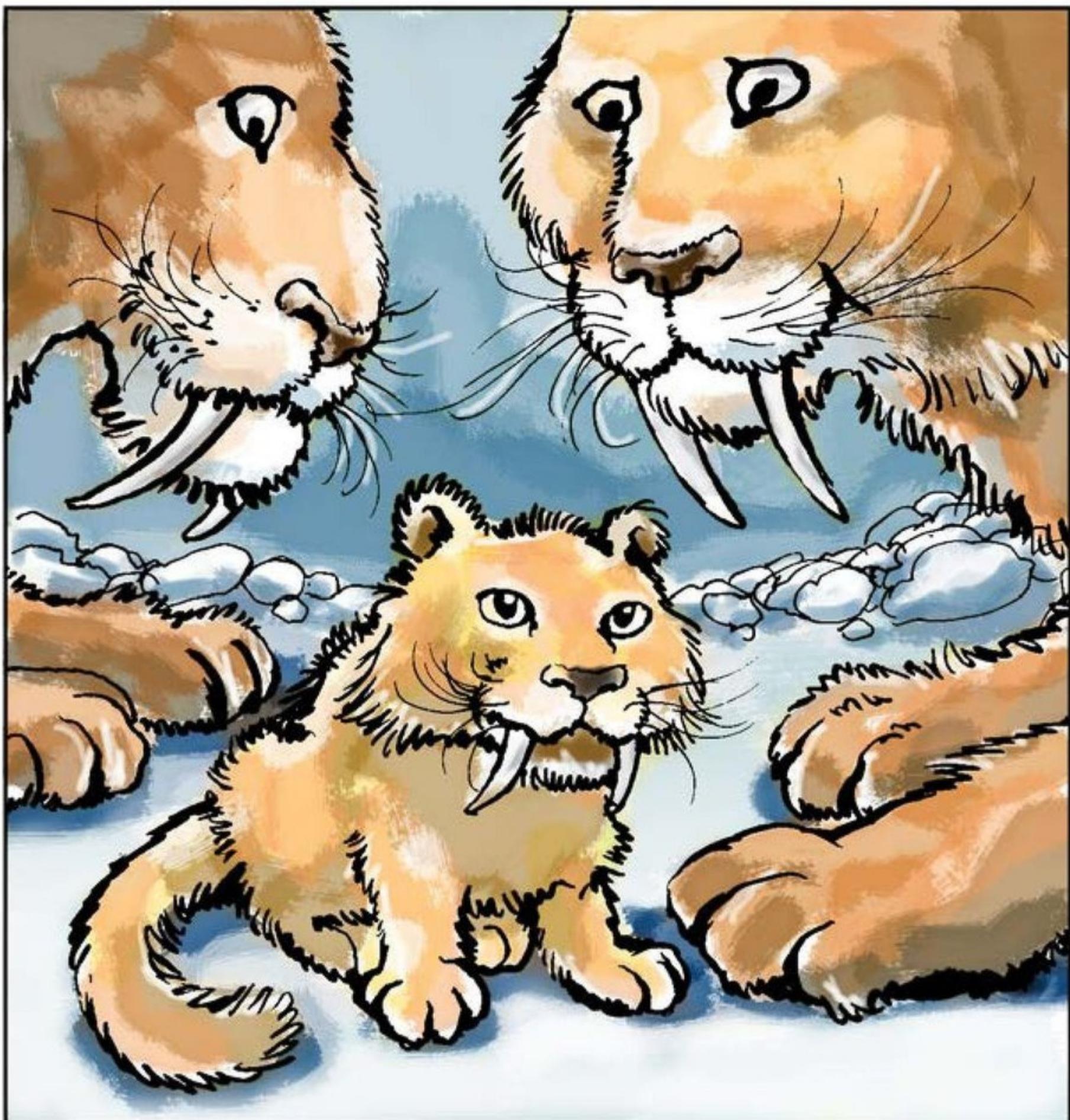


Here, too, were the mighty saber-toothed tigers—heavy of coat, and strong of limb. They were called saber-toothed because their two upper fangs were curved like a sword or saber. They were hunters who preyed upon those creatures that lived on the edge of the glaciers. They ate anything and everything that they could catch. One of their favorite foods was the woolly mammoth.

Now, the mammoth may have been the tigers' favorite food, but it was also the most dangerous. For, you see, the mammoths were just that, mammoth. They were big and had thick hides covered by long, woolly coats. Some of them weighed over a ton, and could easily step on a saber-toothed tiger. More importantly, if a mammoth was mad, its long, curled tusks could be great weapons.

The saber-toothed tigers contented themselves with snacking on the smaller creatures that lived on and around the blue-ice glacier. Still, they looked for any opportunity to have a big woolly mammoth meal. They watched for the old, the injured, and, a special delicacy, the baby mammoth.





One blustery cold day, colder than most others, a baby saber-toothed tiger was born in a snow cave near the heart of a blue-ice glacier. His coat was thick, and he had two large eyes. For the most part he looked like any other saber-toothed tiger. But he had two of the longest saber teeth that you have ever seen. Proudly, his mother and his father named him Fang.

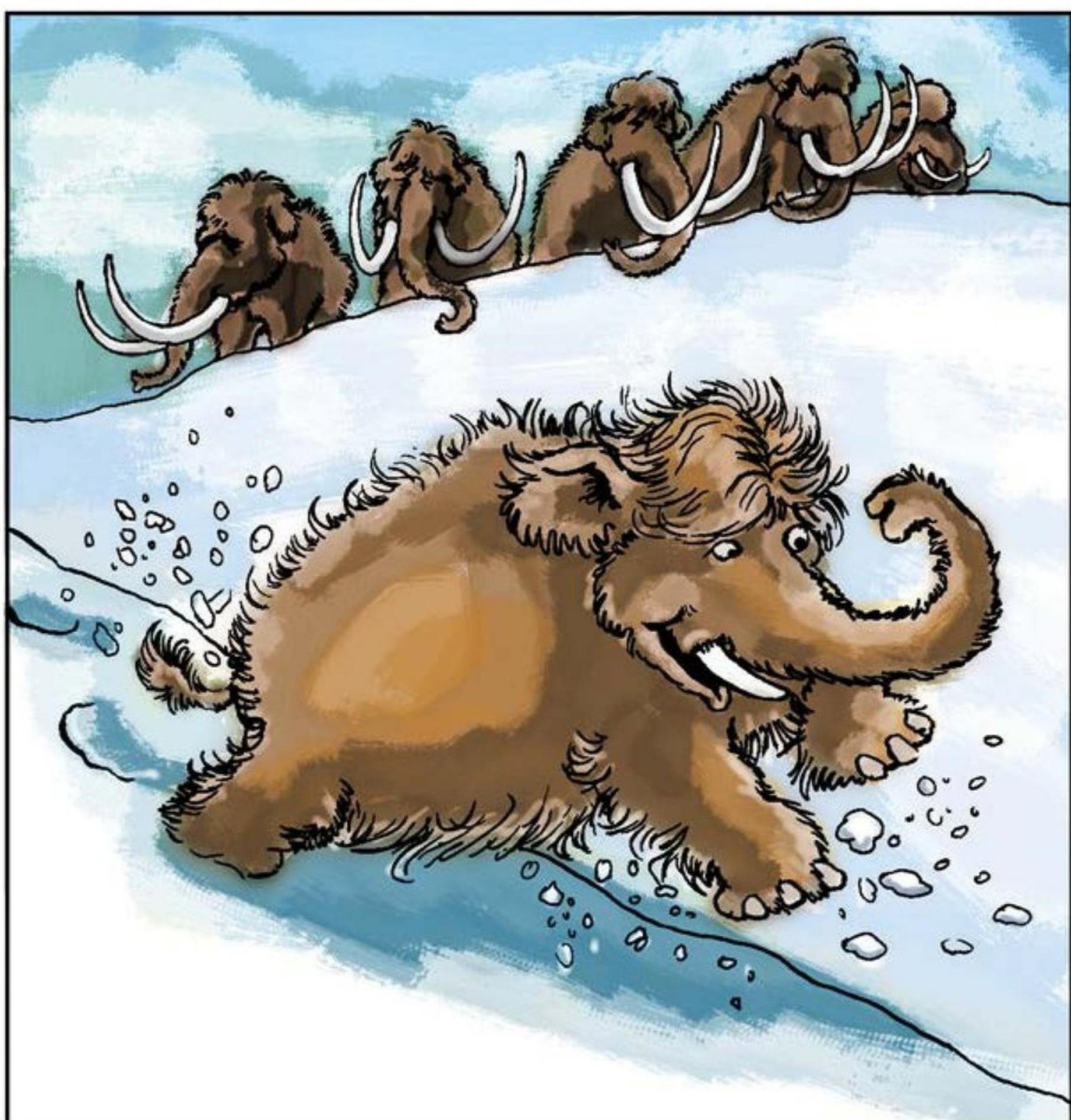
Coincidentally, not far away, in a snowfield on the other side of the blue-ice glacier, a mother mammoth gave birth to a new calf. The calf's tusks, though tiny, showed great promise for curve and length. His ears and trunk were short, but that was to be expected. The hair that covered his body was long and thick. Truly, this mammoth would be warm on the coldest of days. His parents named him Woolly.





Life was very hard during this time of icy cold. There was danger everywhere on and around the glacier. There were deep crevasses hidden by thin layers of delicate snow that formed false bridges. Should you choose to walk across one of these bridges, your choice could be very wrong. The bridge of snow could collapse, and you would fall to the bottom of a deep crevasse with sheer walls of ice that could not be climbed.

Fang and Woolly grew and, although surrounded by danger, they filled their lives with adventure. They were young and full of life, and every day was a new experience. And so they grew. Woolly would charge through the drifts of snow that blanketed the snowfields, exploding out on the other side. He played and played but always under the watchful eyes of the entire herd of mammoths.

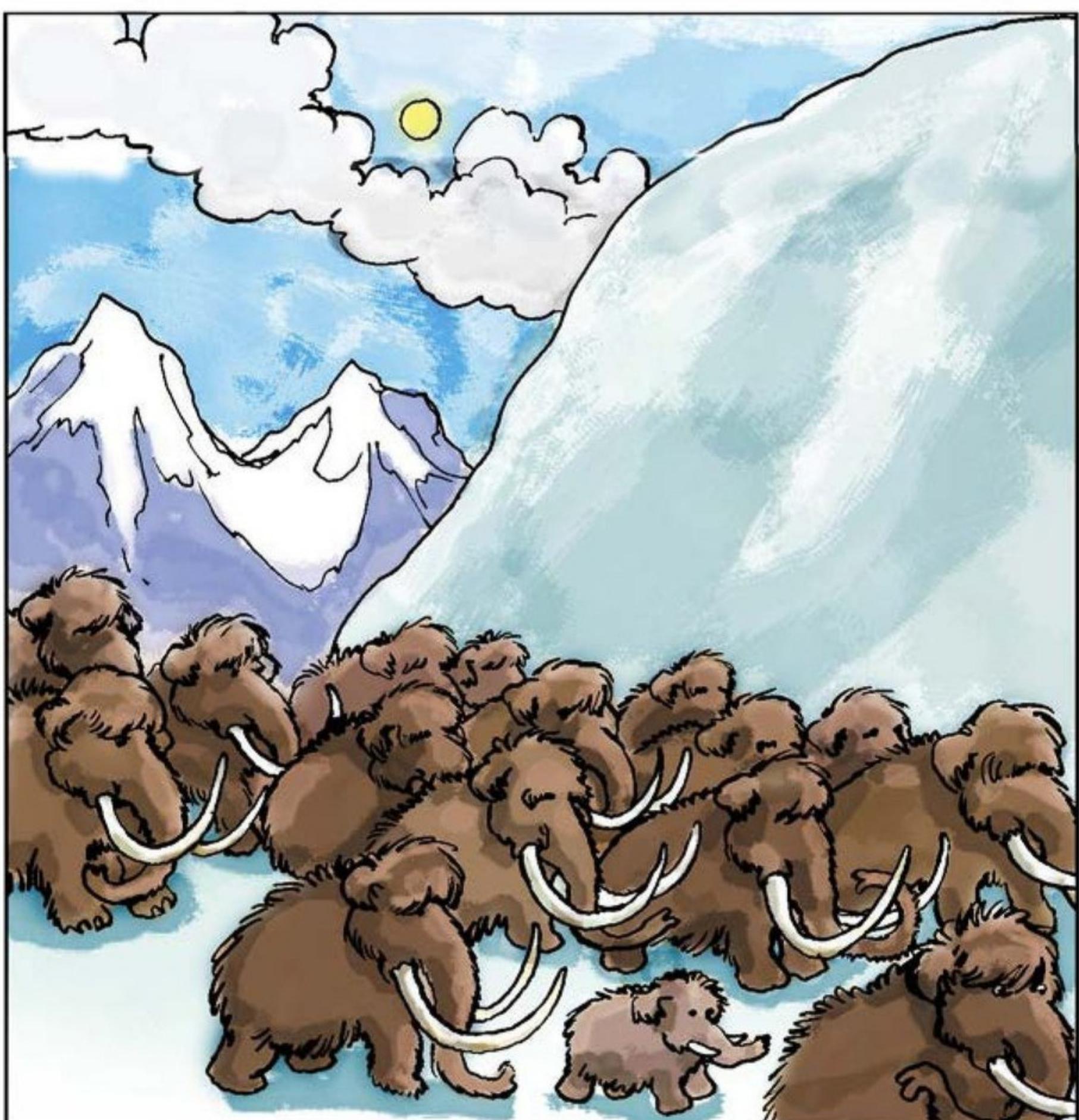


Fang lived inside the ice cave and only ventured out onto the slippery surface when his parents were there to watch over him. There he would scamper and skid, chasing after a ball of hard-packed snow or stalking the shadows of his parents as they walked the ridge.



The saber-toothed tigers always looked toward the snowfield and the herd of mammoths. Food was scarce on the glacier, and the thought of the meal below kept them on the prowl. They would crouch behind boulders above the field and wait for an opportunity, a chance that never seemed to come.

If it was possible, it seemed to be getting even colder around the blue-ice glacier. Even the hardy grasses that grew beneath the snow had become scarce. The herd had moved the snow in the field from over the grass, and there was nothing left to eat. So it came to be that the mammoths had to move away from the glacier. They began a migration toward the south to find warmth and food.





The glacier formed a mighty U around the snowfield. The fastest way to the south would force the mammoths to climb up and over a steep, narrow section of massive ice. Because of the cold and lack of food, it was a risk they had to take.

Woolly, being the youngest, was placed in the middle of the herd. The snow was deep, but the mammoths' feet trampled the snow into a packed path, making the going easy for Woolly. Together, as one, they moved up from the snowfield and onto the blue-ice glacier.

As they started down the other side, they realized there was something watching from the ice cliffs above. The scent of the saber-toothed tiger was heavy in the air. The mammoths in the lead began swinging their massive tusks from side to side while trumpeting a challenge to the hunters above.





But food had been very scarce for the saber-toothed tigers, and they knew that their only source of food was migrating. With a roar that shattered the stillness of the day, they attacked. They leaped from the rocks, hoping to frighten the herd into scattering to make the weak more vulnerable. The weakest—the meal they sought—was in the middle. It was a small mammoth named Woolly.



As one the herd began to run, Woolly stumbling along, his ears extended in fear. The large cats charged, leaping onto the back of one of the older females at the back of the running herd. She bellowed in anger and pain, pulling from the safety of the herd. Woolly knew that voice. It was his mother!

He turned toward the sound and ran out of the safety of the herd, just as the group thundered across a snow bridge above a deep crevasse.

Meanwhile, Woolly's mother, as strong as strong could be, shook and rolled her shoulders to free herself from the clinging beasts. But the tigers had teeth and claws buried in her thick hide, and they were not easily thrown.

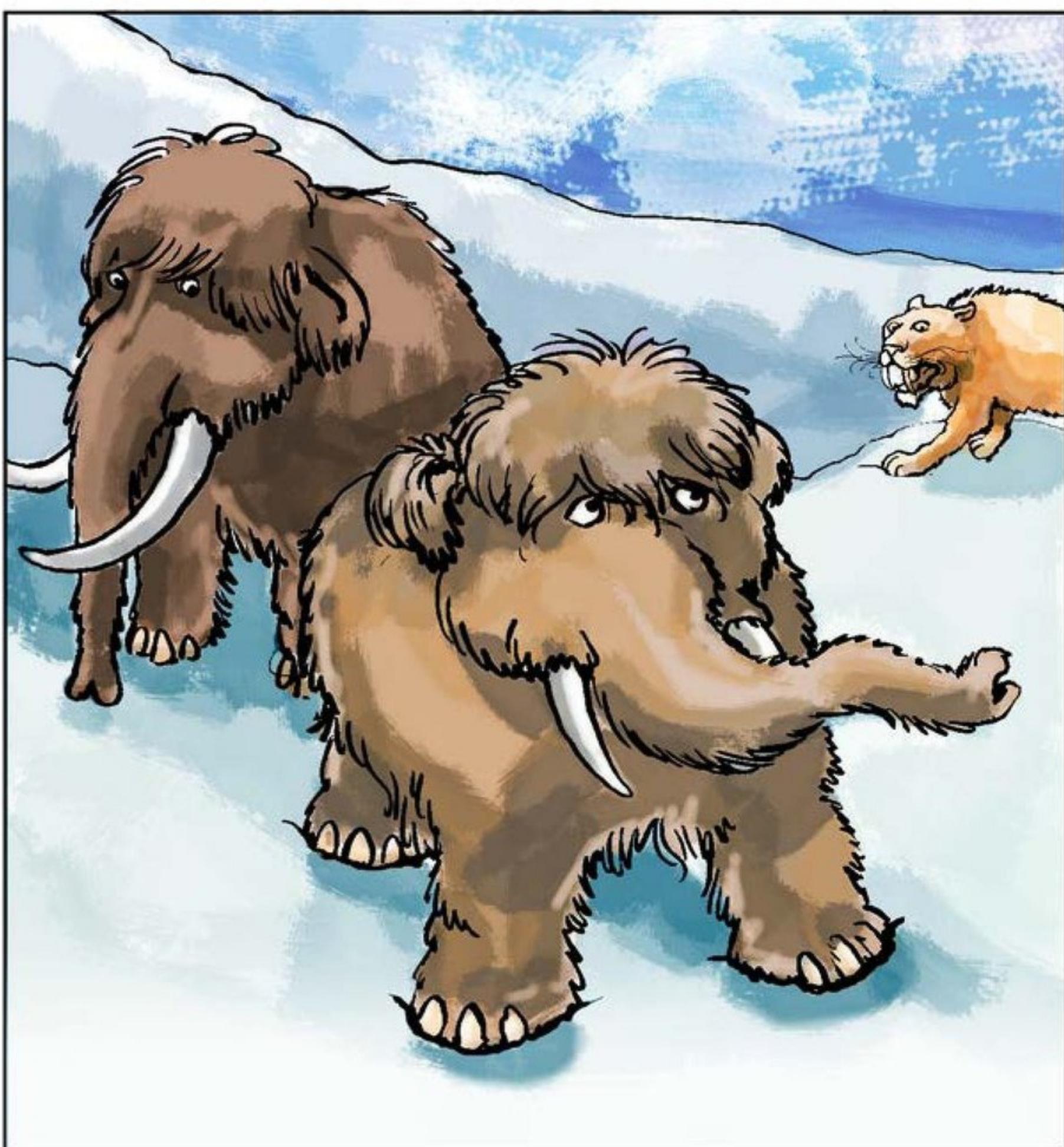
No one knows who would have won the battle between the tigers and the mammoth cow. For at that moment, Woolly raced back up the packed snow trail, his tiny curved tusks raised for battle.



The saber-toothed tigers had what they wanted! The weakest was now isolated from the herd. They leaped from the female's back and crouched facing the charging calf.

Woolly's mother, not realizing what was happening, stood there dazed.

Woolly continued his charge. The male saber-toothed tiger stood his ground, and then slipped to the side, allowing Woolly to continue his charge toward the female cat. Now they had him trapped between the two of them. This would be an easy kill.





The large female cat hissed and hunched her massive back, the coarse hair bristling. Her mouth was open wide, exposing the lower, razor-sharp teeth. Her long fangs curved down from above. Woolly skidded to a stop. He turned to run, only to face the male, who was crouching behind, waiting to attack.

Woolly was trapped. Fear overcame him, and he stood there frozen still. His trunk swiped back and forth in the snow, matching the angry snaps of the cats' tails.

Then, just as all seemed lost, all was saved.

The ice shook with the thundering feet of Woolly's mother. She had shaken off the pain of her wounds, and the attacked became the attacker.



With her trunk, she grabbed the female saber-toothed tiger from behind and lifted her high in the air. Then, with a twist of her mighty head, she dashed the cat onto the ice. One thunderous step and the tiger was dead. She quickly turned her attention to the larger male saber-toothed tiger, who had swung at Woolly with his massive clawed paw. Woolly had backed away just in time, but his side had been raked with the jagged claws.



Woolly's mother lowered her massive, high-domed skull and charged. The saber-toothed tiger, focusing only on the meal at hand, never saw her coming. Her head smashed into his side, just as he attempted to finish Woolly off. Using all of her massive weight, she pressed down on the saber-toothed tiger, and instantly he, too, was dead. Blood dripping down her side from the wounds on her back, she turned to see if there were more. But there was nothing there, except for a small, frightened mammoth calf.

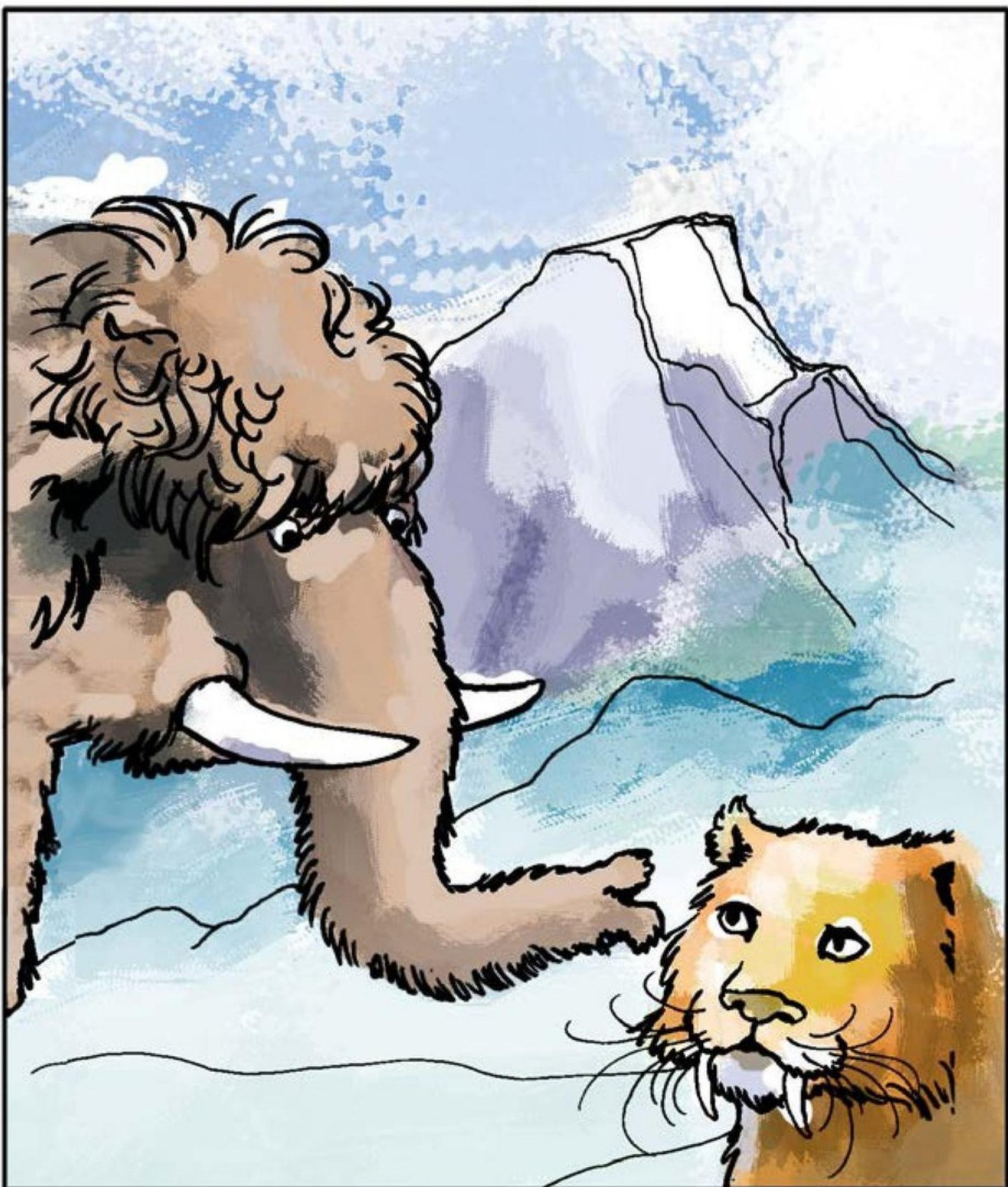
Time was running out. Urging Woolly to follow, she hurried back down the snow-packed trail to the narrow ice bridge across the crevasse. She started across, with Woolly following. The snow bridge, weakened by the herd that had gone before, began to crumble. Chunks of snow and ice broke away as the bridge slowly collapsed. Woolly stopped at the last possible moment, stepping back onto the solid ice of the glacier.





With a gasp, he watched as his mother fell from the bridge into the seemingly bottomless chasm. His heart pounded, and large tears formed and froze in the corners of his eyes. His mother was gone! Worse than worse, he was trapped on the glacier, and the herd was on the other side, fading from view. He trumpeted a long, lonely tone that echoed down into the chasm. And then, there was only silence.

Woolly's call did not go unheard. For in an ice-cave not far away, a young saber-toothed tiger first heard the blood call of his parents, and then, last, the haunting farewell from the young calf.



*Now, the ending of this story is up to you.
What happens next to these two young creatures
trapped in isolation on the blue-ice glacier?
What do they do for food? What does Woolly do
for shelter? Does the hunter become the hunted?
Just how will it end? The author would like to
know what you think and why.*

Woolly and Fang
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Learning A-Z
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