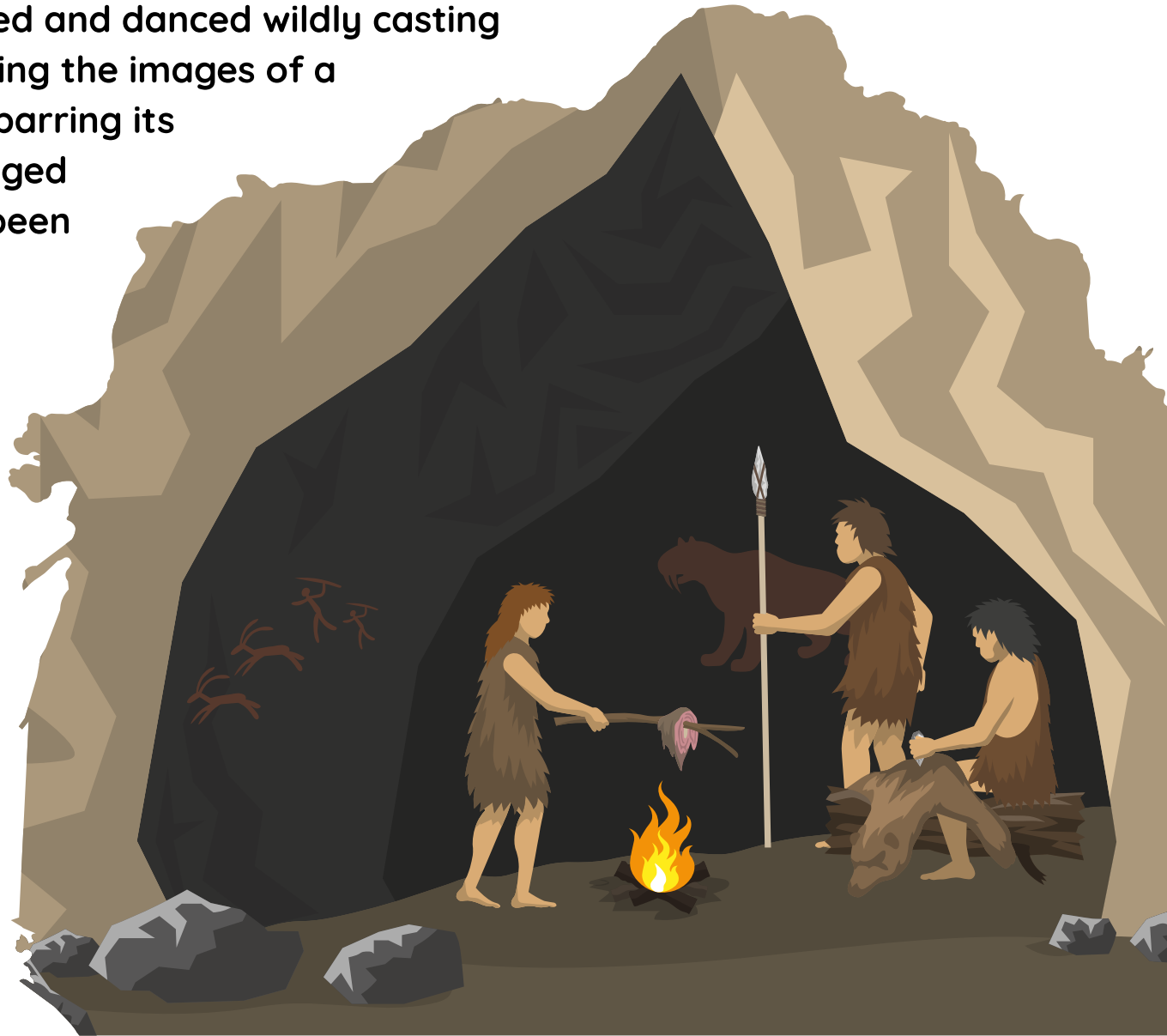


# A Matter of Pride



Words were neither used nor needed. His father's strong hand pressing assertively on his chest; his pointed stare and the shake of his head were all it took to show that once again he would be left behind while the elders of the tribe went off on the hunt. Slowly, with the all too familiar feeling of rejection weighing him down, he turned and retreated back to the dark recess of the cave. His home: his prison. Hot tears welled up in his eyes and a fierce rage burned inside his chest.

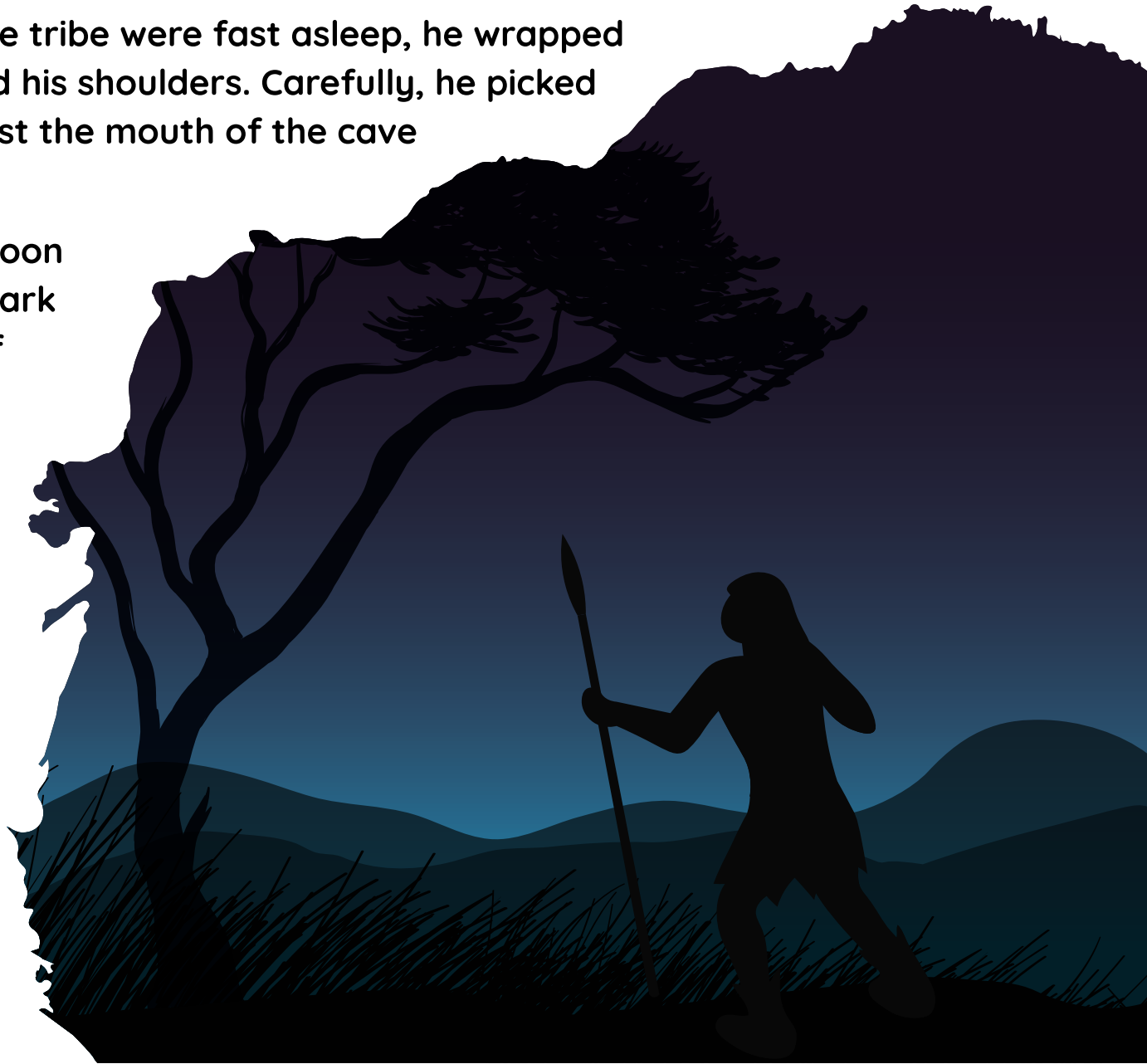
In the centre of the cave, flames flickered and danced wildly casting huge shadows all around him - illuminating the images of a great beast rearing up on its hind legs, barring its enormous canine teeth. A spear was lodged firmly between its ribs. The image had been etched deep into the stone walls as a reminder of the tribe's dominance over nature. At that exact moment, his frustration transformed into determination. Determination to prove himself worthy of the hunt. Determination never to be left behind with the youngsters again. There weren't many of these great beasts left; he determined that he would track one down and bring it back as a demonstration of his strength and courage.



With his mind made up, he pretended to settle down to sleep on the soft animal skin that he called bed. It wasn't long before the rest of the camp had settled down too. The flames were now nothing more than smouldering embers. The only light came from the crescent moon and the stars which whispered to him in the silence of the unforgiving night.

Once he was certain that the rest of the tribe were fast asleep, he wrapped the soft fur on which he had lay around his shoulders. Carefully, he picked up one of the spears that rested against the mouth of the cave and tiptoed out into the night.

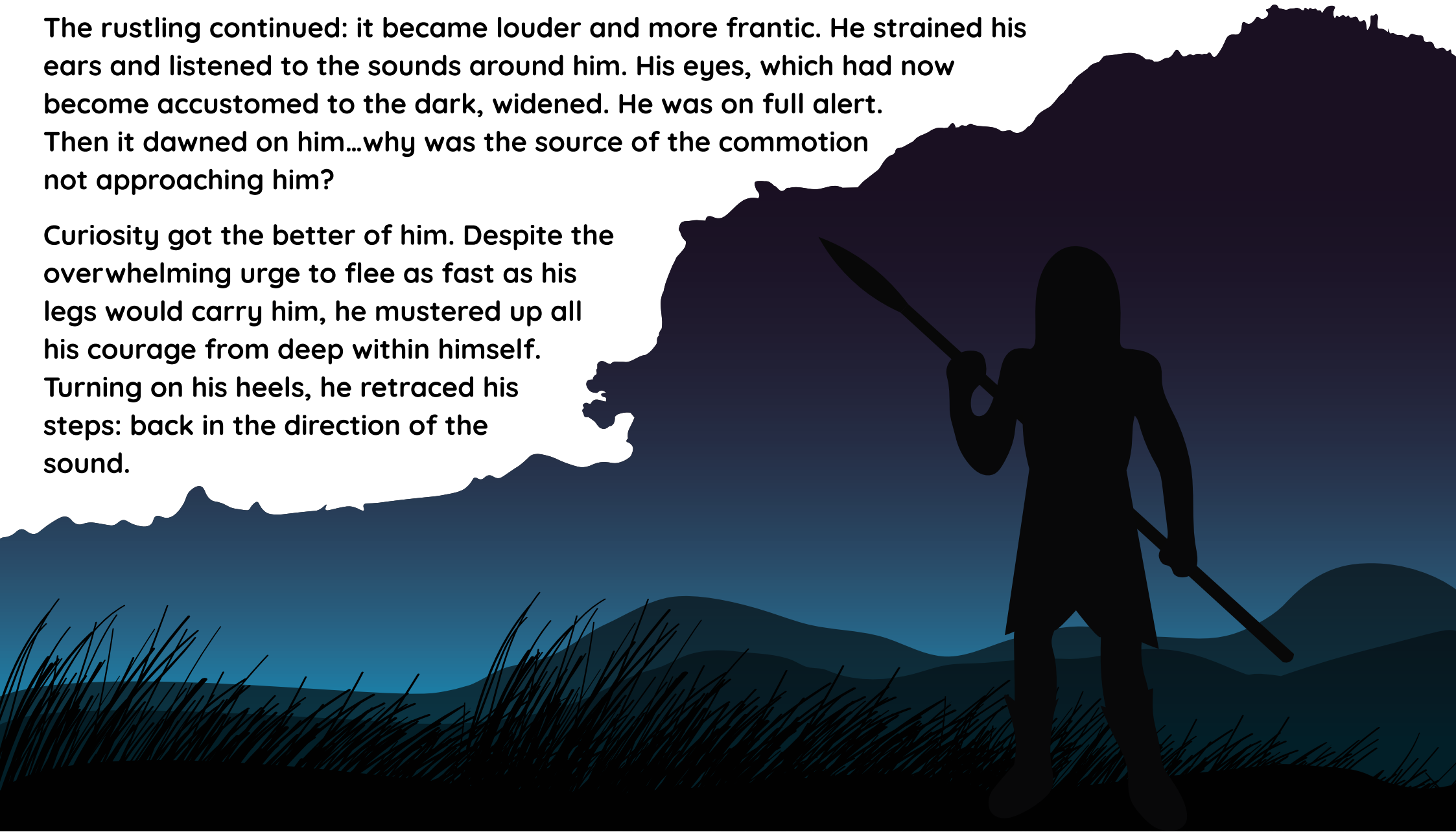
How he wished there had been a full moon to guide him on his journey. It was so dark he could barely see his hand in front of him. Instead he relied on his other senses: he listened for the slightest rustle which would alert him to any movement and sniffed the air for a trace of the unmistakable aroma of his prize. All the time he crept as stealthily as the great beast itself so as not to announce his own presence. Astonished by his bravery, he continued with caution, deeper into the undergrowth where he knew the beast would be tracking down its own prey.



Just as he was beginning to lose hope, he heard a faint sound, it was coming from the direction he had just passed. Something was behind him. With his heart pounding and adrenaline coursing through his veins, he froze to the spot. His legs refused to cooperate. Why couldn't he move? Fear engulfed him, consumed him. Hunter hunted.

The rustling continued: it became louder and more frantic. He strained his ears and listened to the sounds around him. His eyes, which had now become accustomed to the dark, widened. He was on full alert. Then it dawned on him...why was the source of the commotion not approaching him?

Curiosity got the better of him. Despite the overwhelming urge to flee as fast as his legs would carry him, he mustered up all his courage from deep within himself. Turning on his heels, he retraced his steps: back in the direction of the sound.





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