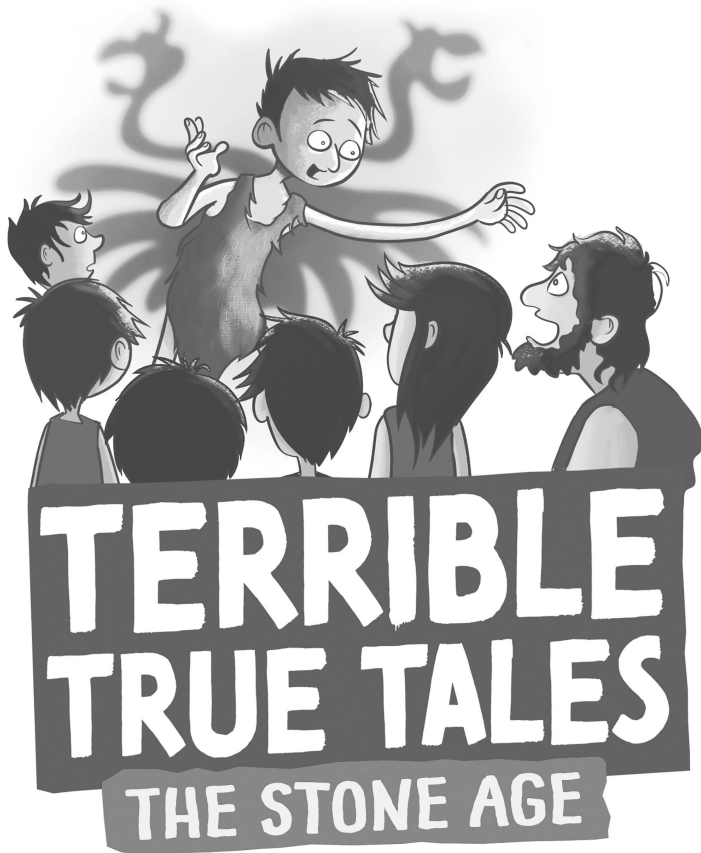


FROM THE BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF HORRIBLE HISTORIES

TERRY DEARY



TERRIBLE TRUE TALES

THE STONE AGE

Inside illustrations by Tambe

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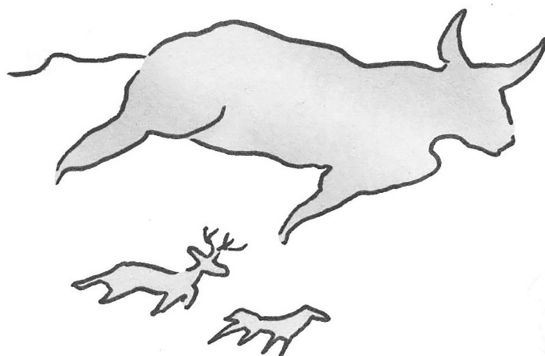


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The Great Cave



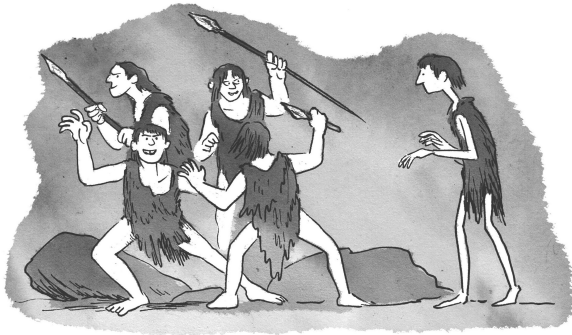


1

Willow

17,300 years ago; Lascaux in France

They called the weak boy Willow. The strong boys were given strong names: Oak and Rock, Bull and Bone. But willow trees bent in the wind and drooped by the river. Willow limped after the hunters with his twisted leg but was never fast enough to be there at the kill.



The chief of the tribe was Flint, when Willow was young. Flint's hair was grey as the stone in the caves where they made their home. 'They say he's thirty-five winters old,' Willow's mother whispered to him one morning. 'They say he'll soon be dead.'

Willow nodded. 'Who'll be chief then?' he asked.

The woman shook her ragged head of hair as she fastened a cloak of rabbit skins round Willow's neck. 'The best hunter, I suppose.'

A fire flickered on the floor of the cave. Bones from last night's meal lay near it. Suddenly, two great hounds bounded into their hut and snapped at the leg-bone of a deer.

A man hurried in after them. 'Don't let the dogs eat, Rainbow,' he grumbled at Willow's mother. 'I want them hungry for the hunt.'



The man snatched at the bone but the dog, swift and grey as a rain-cloud, fled through the door and into the daylight outside.

‘Sorry, Flint,’ Rainbow moaned. ‘I should have buried them.’

The man’s anger slipped away and he sighed. ‘Never mind,’ he said with a small smile. ‘Perhaps we’ll make another kill today and we’ll all eat well come darkness. Dogs and men.’

Willow picked up a wooden spear with a stone tip that he'd rubbed as sharp as one of Rainbow's bone-needles. 'I'm ready,' he said, eager and bright-eyed.

Flint lowered himself onto the warm deer skins on the floor. He was slow and stiff and Willow thought he heard the old man's bones creak.

'You could stay at home with the women,' he said. 'There are skins in the main cave. They need to be sewn together to make warm clothes for winter. You could help.'

Willow's mouth fell open. He swallowed tears. 'I'm a man... nearly,' he said. 'I want to hunt. Don't make me stay with the women.'

Flint nodded at Willow's twisted leg. 'You can't keep up, boy. You've tried. You know you can't.'

Willow's face burned red. 'I can carry the meat back to the caves,' he argued. 'Don't make me stay behind.'

Flint shrugged. 'I'm not much faster myself,' he sighed. 'There was a time when I could run alongside a horse and bring it down. No one else in the tribe could do that.'

'I wish I'd seen that,' Rainbow said with a sigh. 'But now you make plans. You are wise. You find the tracks and tell the hunters where to hide. Now you let the others do the running, Flint.'



The old man nodded and struggled to his feet. Willow stretched out a hand to help him. 'Come along, boy,' Flint said. 'We'll limp along at the back together, eh?'

Willow grinned. 'A deer or a horse or a bull will die today,' he said.

The old man and the boy shuffled up the slope towards the mouth of the cave. One of them would not walk back.

