



Tig and her big brother stared at the icy landscape ahead. Even from here, the Wildness seemed full of danger. Behind them, huddled against the slopes of the mountain, was the warmth and comfort of the camp. It looked like the last safe place on earth.

Had they wandered too far from home?

'We've been out all day, Tig,' Uga said. 'It'll soon be dark. Shall we go back?'

'Not yet,' said Tig.

She glanced down at the marks she'd made. No, not marks. They were more than that – a complete picture she'd drawn in the mud. With a dozen quick strokes of her stick, she'd sketched a deer with horns so enormous they looked like the tangled branches of a tree. Uga recognised the animal at once. 'That's really clever,' he told her.

'Just lots of practice,' Tig shrugged.

Uga knew this was true. Tig wasn't like most girls. She didn't want to be a homemaker, or a gatherer, or to plant the crops which helped keep the tribe alive. She didn't want to be a fighter or a hunter, like her brother and the other boys, either. Uga sighed and shook his head.



He already knew the answer but he asked the question anyway. 'So what do you want to do when you are older, Tig? There must be *something* you fancy.'

'I want to make pictures like this one.'

'That's all?'

'I want to draw the animals that live in the Wildness.

The bears and the bison, the lions and horses, the mammoths and rhinos and reindeer. But the big-horned deer is my favourite.'

Tig jabbed at the outline she'd just sketched. 'It's the antlers I like best,' she said. 'They're so huge and heavy.'

'Maybe *too* heavy,' Uga laughed. 'It's a wonder the poor thing can hold up its head!'



It was the wrong thing to say. Tig hated the idea that one of her beloved animals had a fault. She scowled and turned away. Soon, her big brother had to trot to keep up with her as she hurried home, slashing the air with her stick as if it were a whip.

Uga liked animals, too. He really did. But he also liked snuggling up in a pile of their thick, furry skins.

The animals from the Wildness gave everyone clothes and shelter, didn't they? Add a good fire in the middle of the tent, with a hunk of meat roasting over it, and the animals gave them food as well. Yes, the Wildness did sometimes feel like the end of the world. But what better place could there be for a tribe like theirs?



And yet ...

Uga looked back over his shoulder. Tig's deer picture was out of sight now. But he knew it was something special. Was that why Mum and Dad always smiled and nudged each other when they saw her latest sketch? Every line of Tig's drawings was always just as it should be. How long did they last, though? By tomorrow, the wind and the rain from the Wildness would have wiped out every sign of Tig's skill. Out in the open, a drawing in mud or sand lasted a day or two at most.

So what was the point of doing it?

