

Thirty Thousand BC

*By Marilyn Reeves*

I set my Time Machine to arrive at the Tigris River at 2:00pm, 30,000 B.C. The gears whirled and the lights flashed and the machine shuddered and suddenly I was hovering about 5,000 feet above my chosen destination.

To the north I could see massive ice sheets covering much of the land. To the south, along the river, a number of trees thrust leafy green branches toward the heavens, and an abundance of flowering bushes and colorful mosses covered the shoreline. I could see things moving around down there – possibly animals, perhaps even people.

Zooming in for a closer view, I was delighted to see a number of women – some with babies strapped to their backs – bending down, scavenging the ground for edible plants, and placing their findings into roughly woven baskets. As they worked their way upriver, their children tagged along close behind. Some of the older girls were caring for the little ones, while a handful of boys were running and jumping around, tossing something ... a gourd, perhaps? ... back and forth like modern-day kids playing catch. They were all bone-thin with filthy, matted hair hanging in strings about their faces, and were wearing capes and loincloths made from animal pelts.

The women filled earthen pots with water from the river as the little children splashed about in the icy shallows, shrieking with delight. But what was that little thing romping around their feet? A puppy? Yes, a tiny wolf puppy they had apparently adopted as a pet.

I watched as they all retreated along a well-worn path back to a hillside with an overhanging cliff. Some of them took the day's bounty farther back into the cave, while one of the mothers supervised the older boys in laying out kindling, topped with larger branches, and somehow – miraculously – within minutes, one of them started the fire.

As fascinating as it was to watch the women and children performing their daily tasks, my attention was soon diverted by something happening on the hillside above them. Oh my heavens, was that a mammoth? An actual, living mammoth was lumbering along at a rapid pace as it was being pursued by a handful of men hurling long spears at it, trying to take it down. What a sight! Several of those sharp spear points had hit home ... the poor creature was weakening. Through my sound monitor I could hear it cry out as it succumbed to the inevitable and fell with a reverberating thud to the ground. Some of the braver men moved in closer for the kill. One apparently managed to spear the heart, and the animal soon lay still.

I knew there would be great rejoicing at the prospect of all that meat that would feed the little clan for weeks to come and I would have liked to have stayed for the celebration. But it was time for me to return to my own time and my nice apartment, microwave something for dinner, and perhaps catch an hour or two of television before heading to my cozy warm bed, thankful to be living in the now.