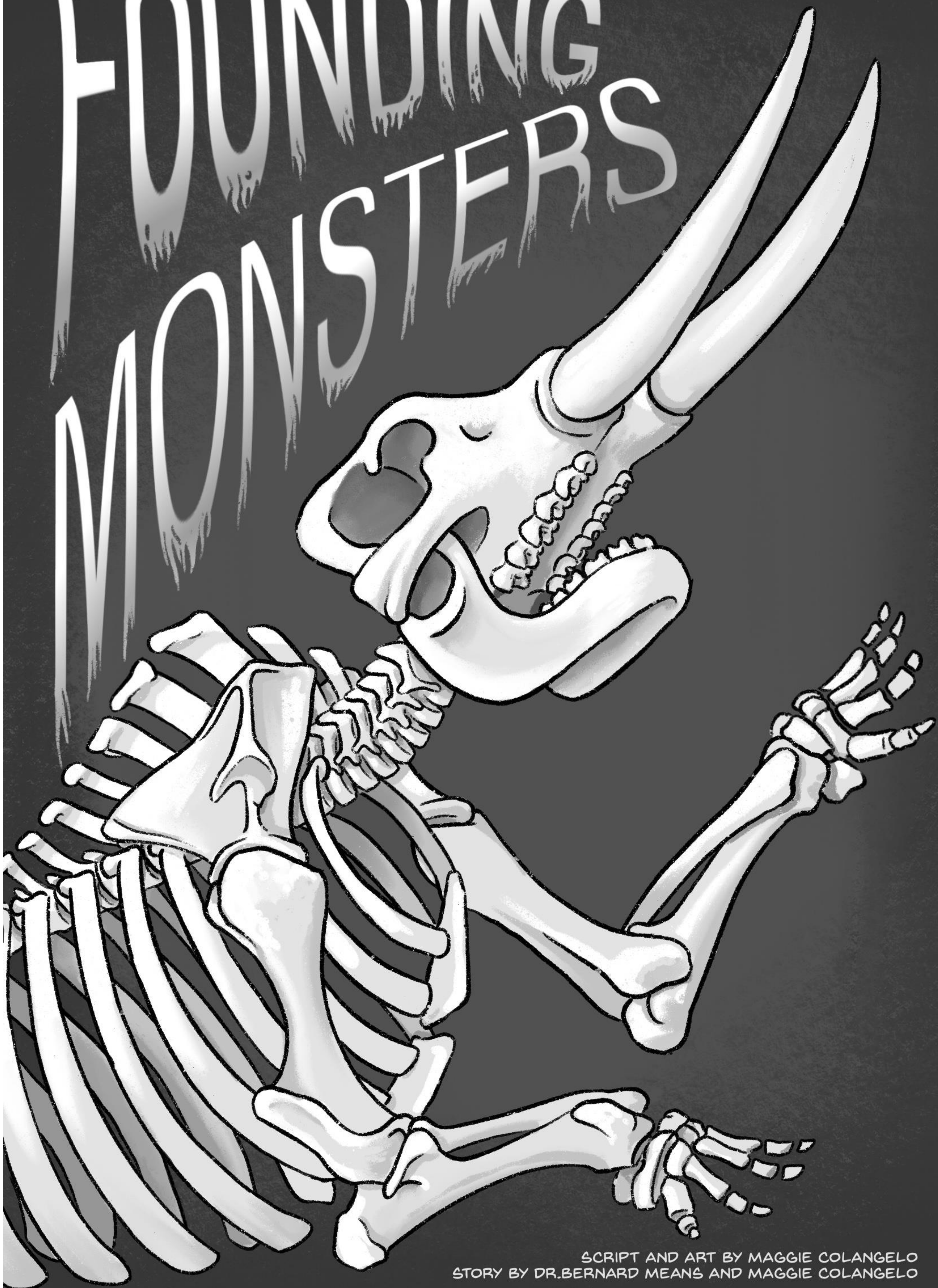
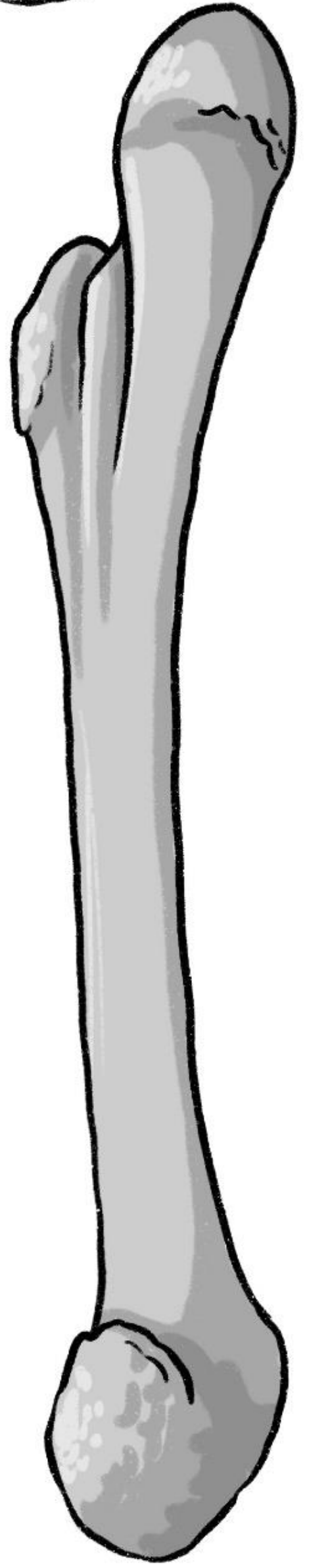
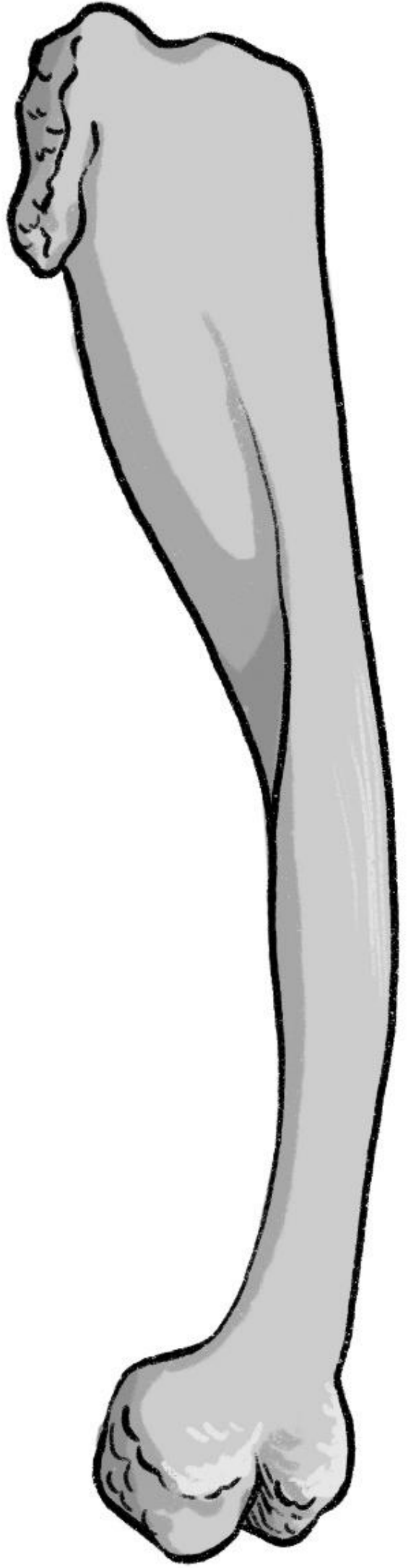
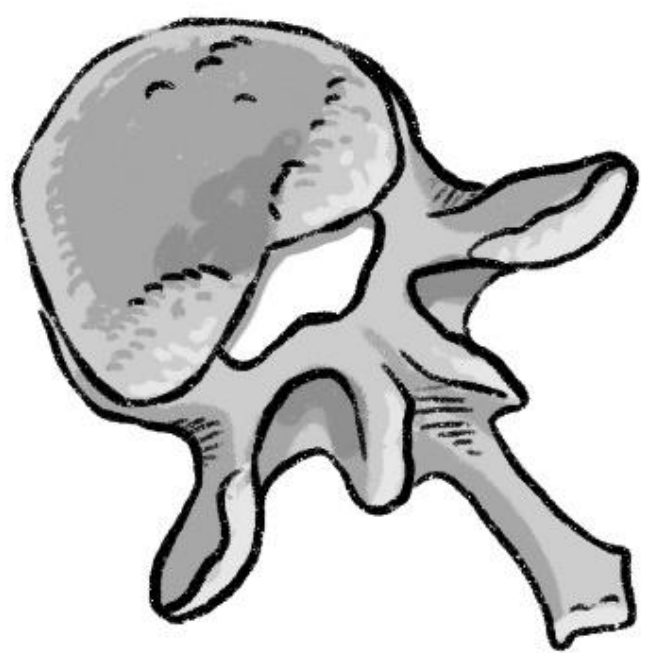


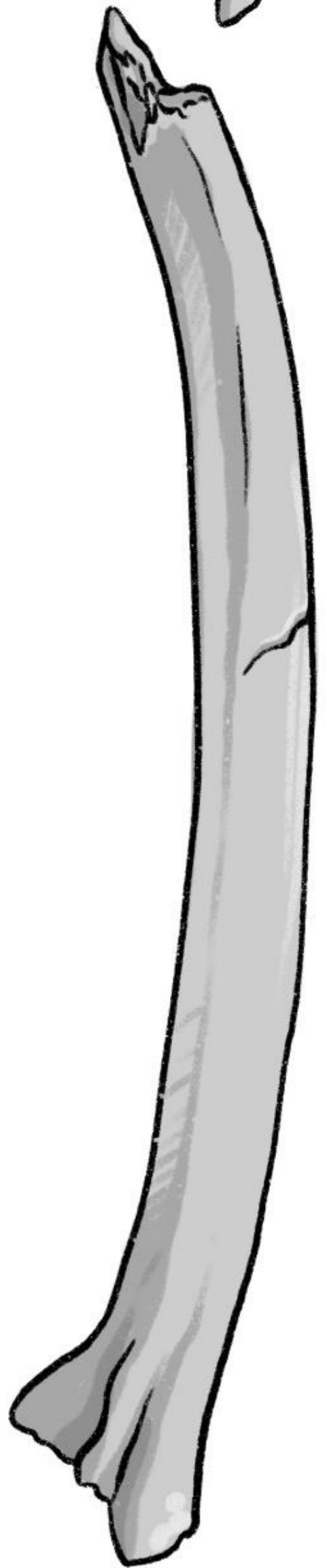
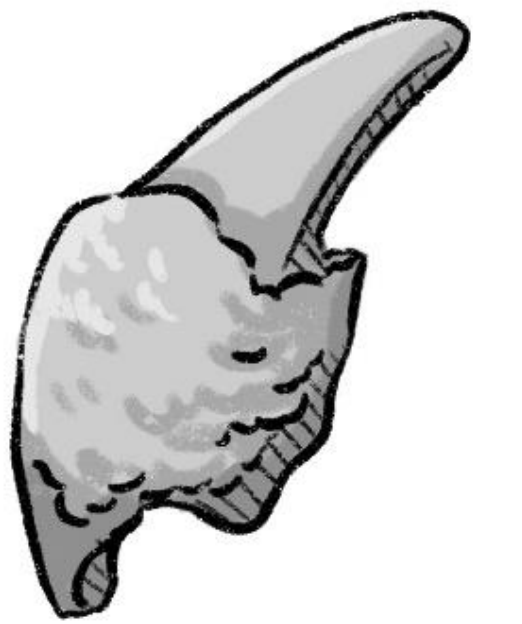
FOUNDING MONSTERS



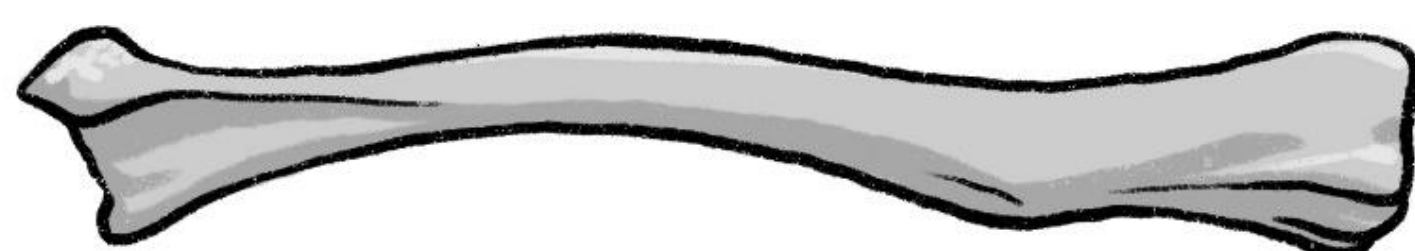
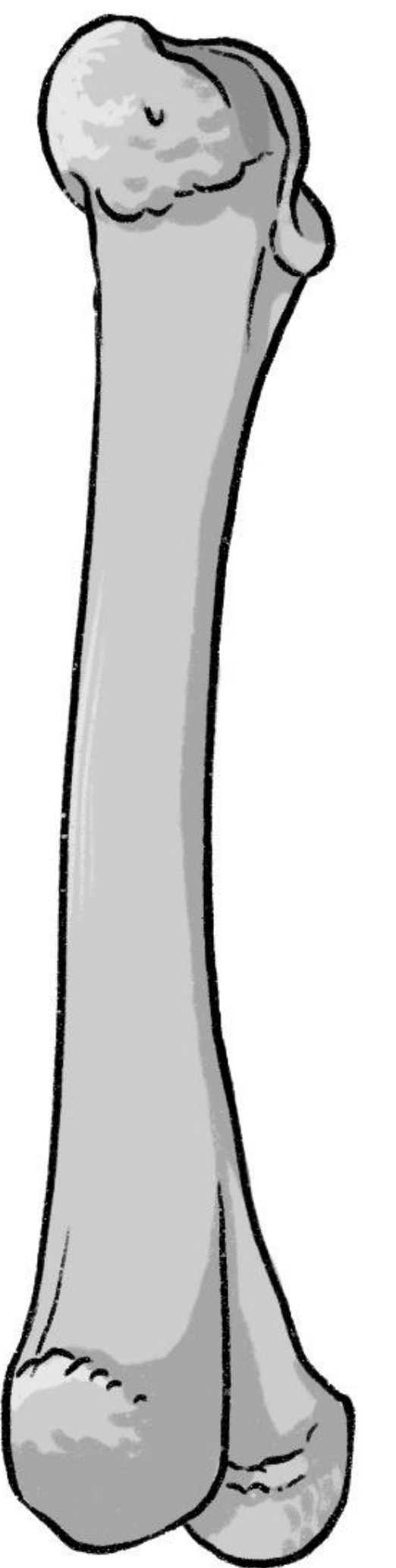
SCRIPT AND ART BY MAGGIE COLANGELO
STORY BY DR. BERNARD MEANS AND MAGGIE COLANGELO



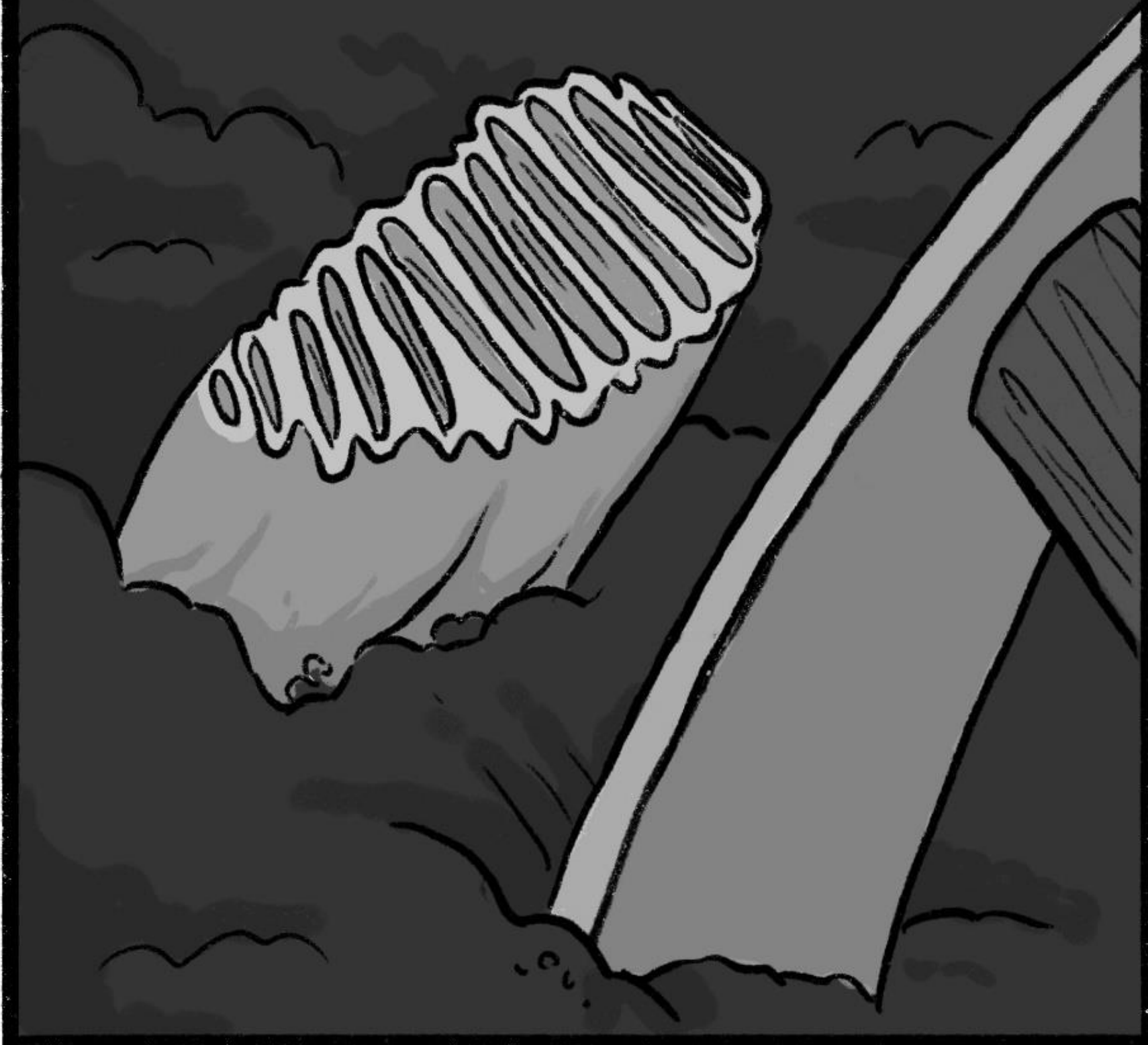
MAGGIE COLANGELO IS A COMMUNICATION ARTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES STUDENT AT VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY. SHE ISN'T QUITE SURE HOW SHE SNUCK INTO ANTHROPOLOGY, BUT SHE'S HAPPY SHE DID! *FOUNDING MONSTERS* IS HER FIRST FULL-LENGTH COMIC.



DR. BERNARD K. MEANS IS AN ARCHAEOLOGIST WHO TEACHES IN THE SCHOOL OF WORLD STUDIES AT VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY (VCU). HE IS ALSO THE DIRECTOR OF THE VIRTUAL CURATION LABORATORY, WHERE HE LEADS TEAMS OF VCU STUDENTS TO 3D SCAN AND 3D PRINT DINOSAUR AND ICE AGE ANIMAL FOSSILS, ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES, AND HISTORICAL ITEMS FOR TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND PUBLIC OUTREACH. DR. MEANS WAS INSPIRED TO RESEARCH THE FOSSILS THAT BELONGED TO THE FOUNDING FATHERS WHEN HE WENT TO PHILADELPHIA IN AUGUST 2016 AND 3D SCANNED BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S MASTODON TOOTH.



OUR STORY BEGINS IN 1725, WHEN A FARMER IN SOUTH CAROLINA STUMBLED ONTO SOME HUGE FOSSILIZED TEETH.



GASP!



A RESPECTED SCIENTIST WAS ASKED TO DETERMINE THE NATURE OF THE TEETH.

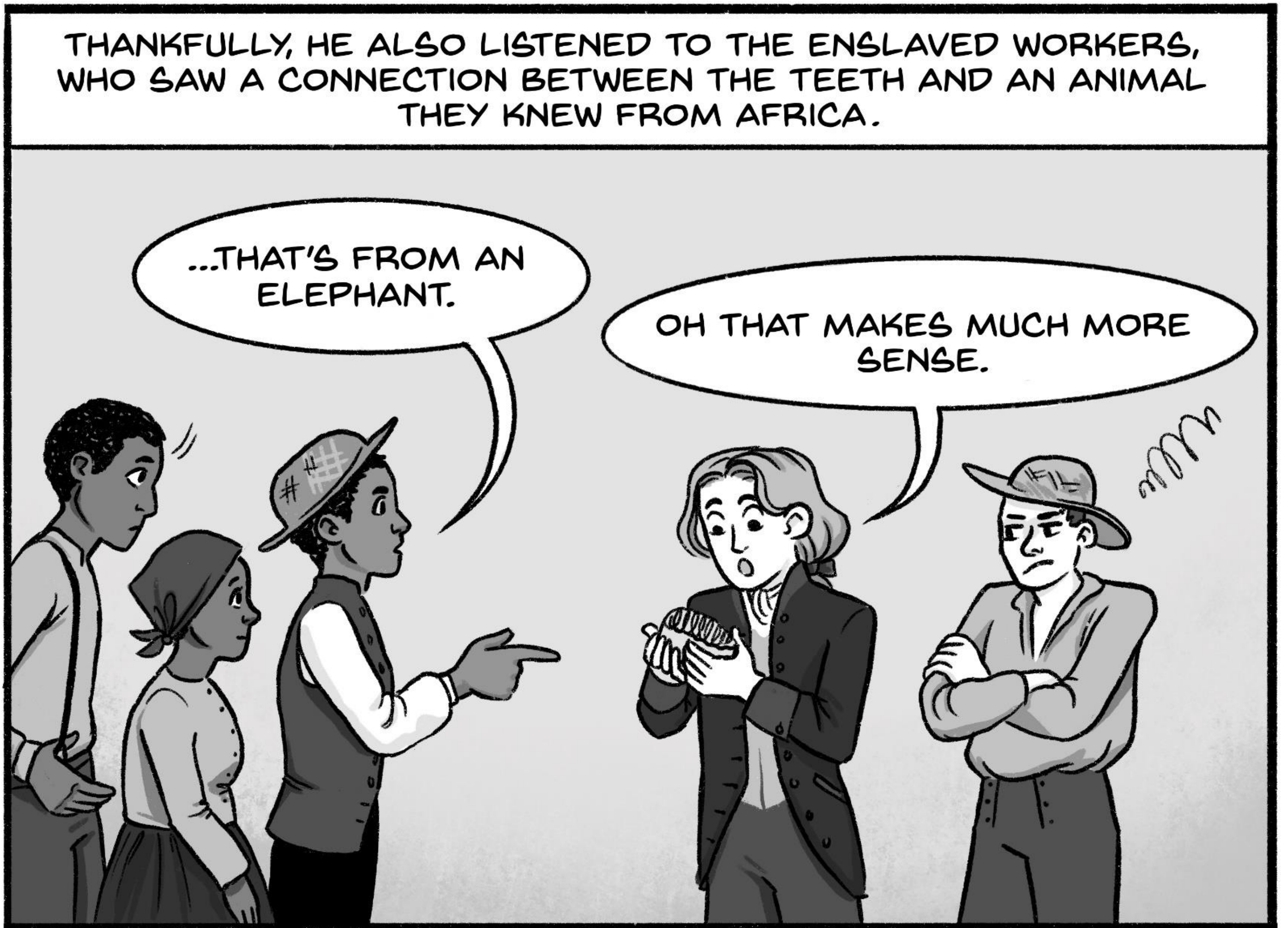
IT'S A GIANT, I TELL YA!



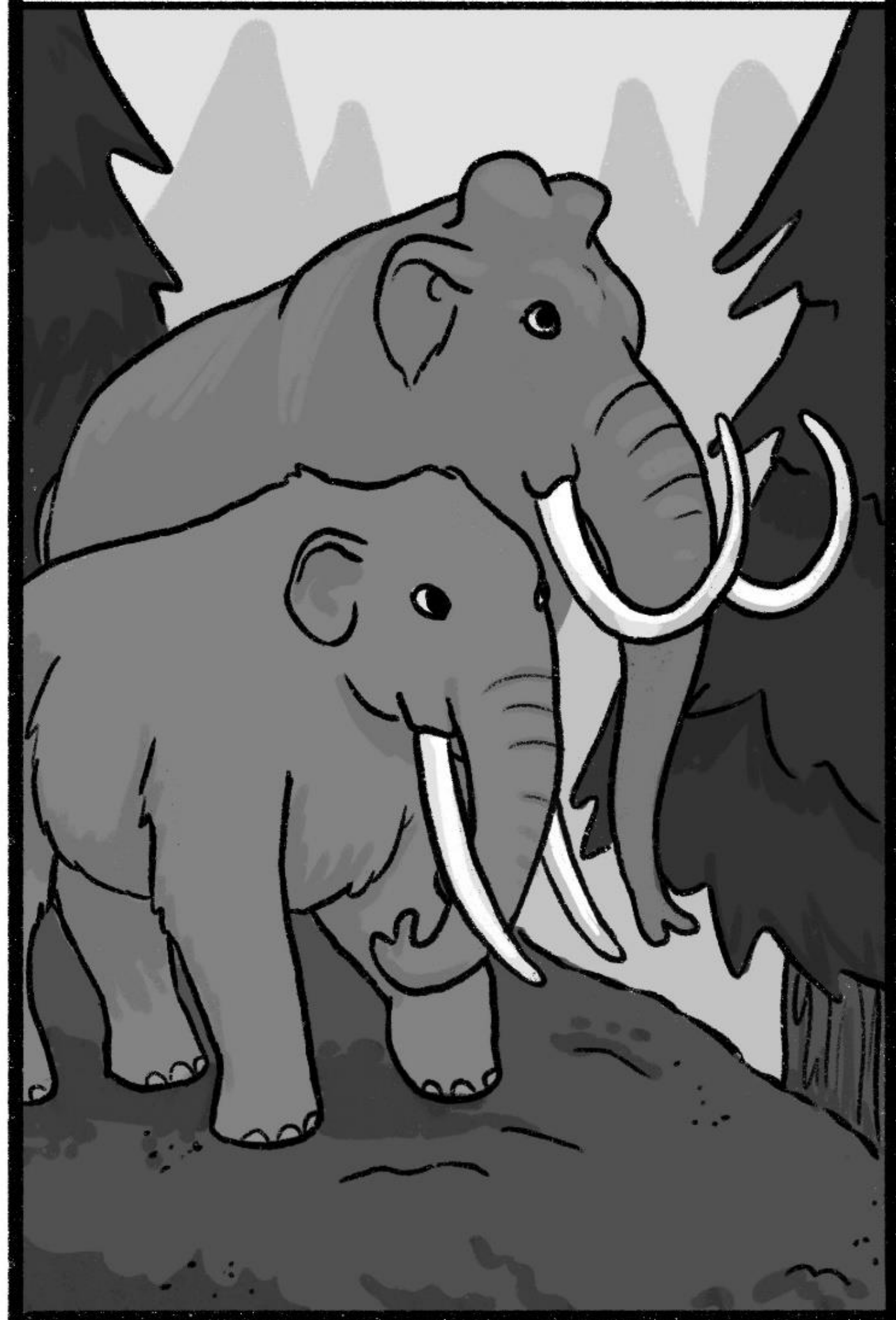
THIS WAS ACTUALLY THE ACCEPTED THEORY OF THE TIME! MANY PEOPLE THOUGHT THAT FOSSILIZED TEETH LIKE THESE WERE FROM GIANTS THAT DIED IN A BIBLICAL FLOOD.

— AHM —

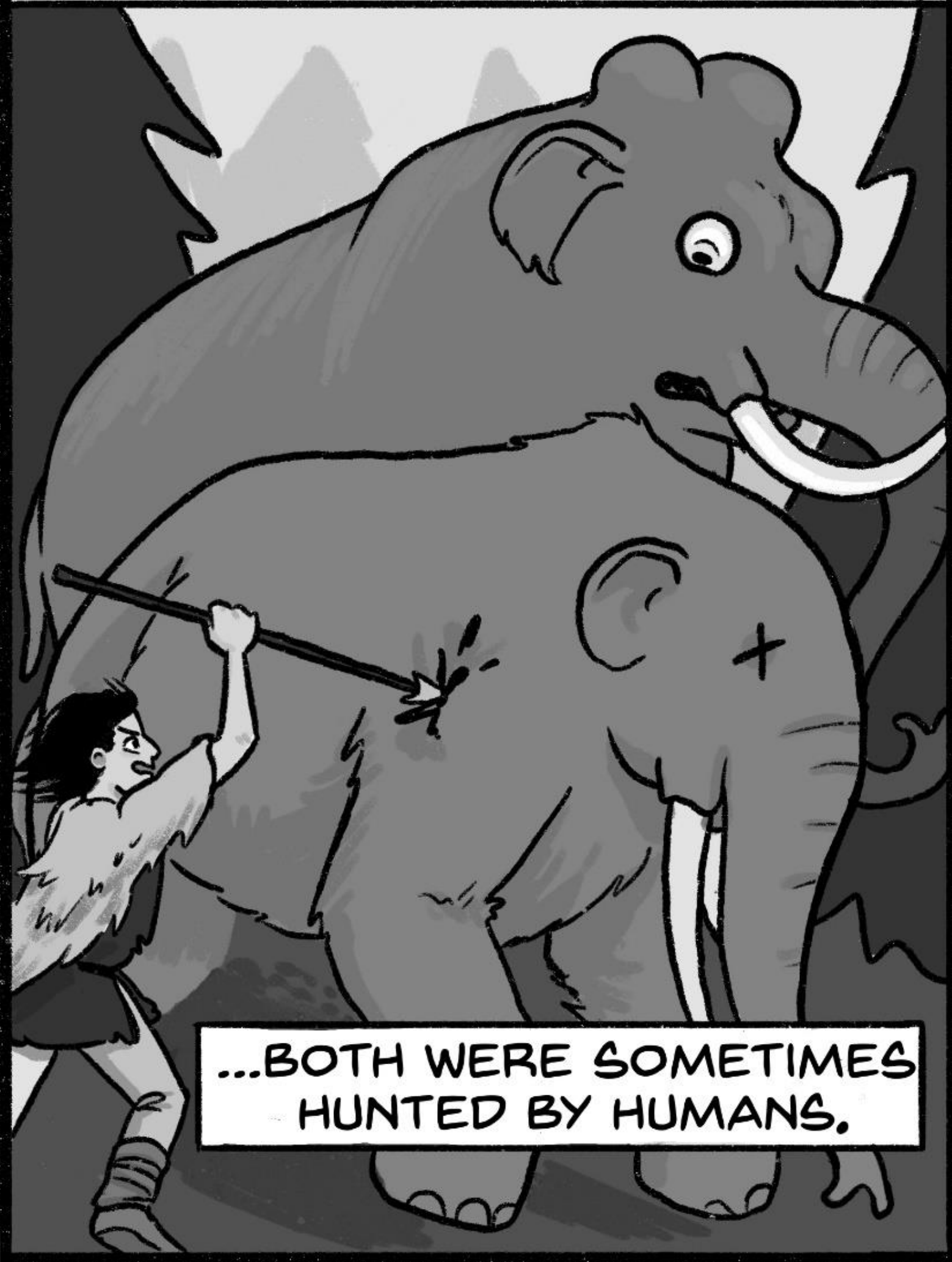




TODAY WE KNOW THAT THIS WAS THE TOOTH OF A MAMMOTH, AN EXTINCT RELATIVE OF TODAY'S ELEPHANTS.



THEY LIVED ALONGSIDE MASTODONS, ANOTHER ELEPHANT RELATIVE, IN THE AMERICAS UNTIL ABOUT 10,000 YEARS AGO.



IN THE 1700'S, MASTODONS WERE HUNTED FOR A DIFFERENT REASON-THEY'D CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF SCIENTISTS ALL OVER AMERICA AND EUROPE.



EVEN BEN FRANKLIN WAS GETTING IN ON THE ACTION!



LITTLE DID THE FOUNDING FATHERS KNOW, MASTODON BONES WOULD BE ENTANGLED IN A DECADES-LONG OBSESSION INVOLVING A 20-FOOT WATER WHEEL, ENEMY SOLDIERS, AND A TRANS-ATLANTIC DEAD MOOSE.

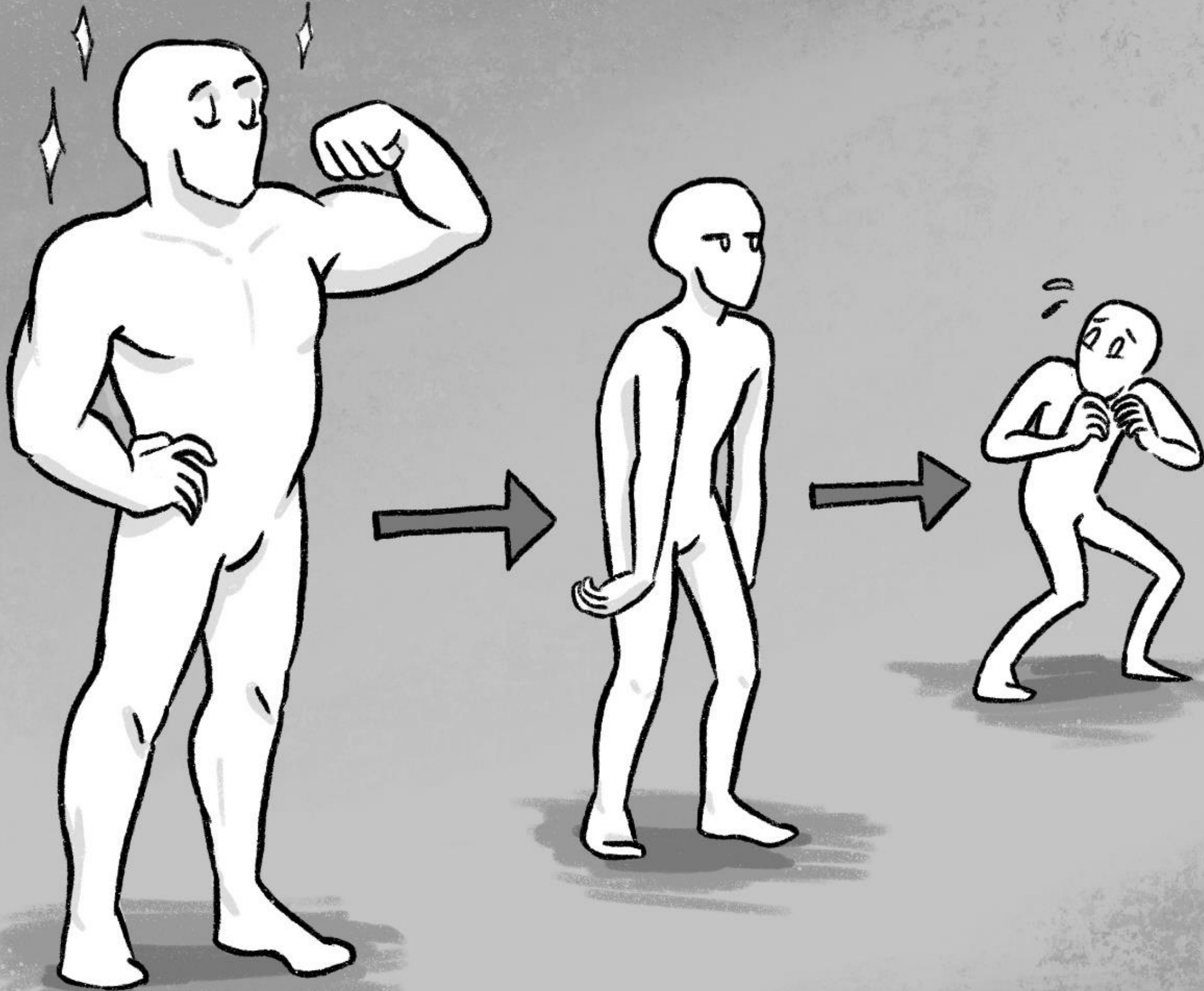
HE BELIEVED THAT AMERICA HAD ONLY RECENTLY RISEN FROM THE SEA, WHICH MADE IT TOO SWAMPY AND HUMID FOR ANY LARGE ANIMALS TO GROW.

THE FAMOUS FRENCH SCIENTIST, GEORGE-LOUIS LECLERC, COMTE DE BUFFON (WHAT A NAME!) OUTLINED HIS INFLUENTIAL "THEORY OF AMERICAN DEGENERACY" IN 1755.



(BUFFON NEVER ACTUALLY SAW NORTH AMERICA HIMSELF.)

THIS THEORY APPLIED TO PEOPLE TOO. BUFFON STATED THAT ANYONE WHO LIVED IN AMERICA WOULD BECOME WEAKER AND SMALLER.



THIS IS **RIDICULOUS!** NO-ONE WITH HALF A BRAIN WOULD BELIEVE THAT!

THE THEORY WAS ACCEPTED KNOWLEDGE ALL OVER EUROPE AND THE COLONIES.

WHAT?



THOMAS JEFFERSON

I'LL GO TO FRANCE PERSONALLY AND TELL THIS BUFFON FELLOW WHAT'S WHAT!

HOLD YOUR HORSES, T.J. THERE'S SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT COMING UP.

WHAT COULD BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE REPUTATION OF MY HOME?



THE REVOLUTIONARY

WAR

OH. THAT.



LATER, AT A REVOLUTIONARY CAMP...



DESPITE THE PRESSURES OF A WAR, THE FOUNDING FATHERS REALIZED SOMETHING PRETTY QUICKLY.

THERE'S NO POINT IN FORMING A NEW COUNTRY IF NO-ONE WANTS TO COME HERE!

-OR BUY OUR GOODS!

EXACTLY!



WE'LL NEVER GET ANY RESPECT IF PEOPLE KEEP BELIEVING BUFFON'S CRACKPOT THEORY!

PEOPLE KEEP CALLING ME SHRIMPY! I'M 6'2"!
THAT DOESN'T EVEN MAKE ANY SENSE!



WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS.

I HAVE AN IDEA!



THIS TOOTH IS EVIDENCE OF A MUCH LARGER CREATURE.

I HAVE ONE OF THOSE TOO!

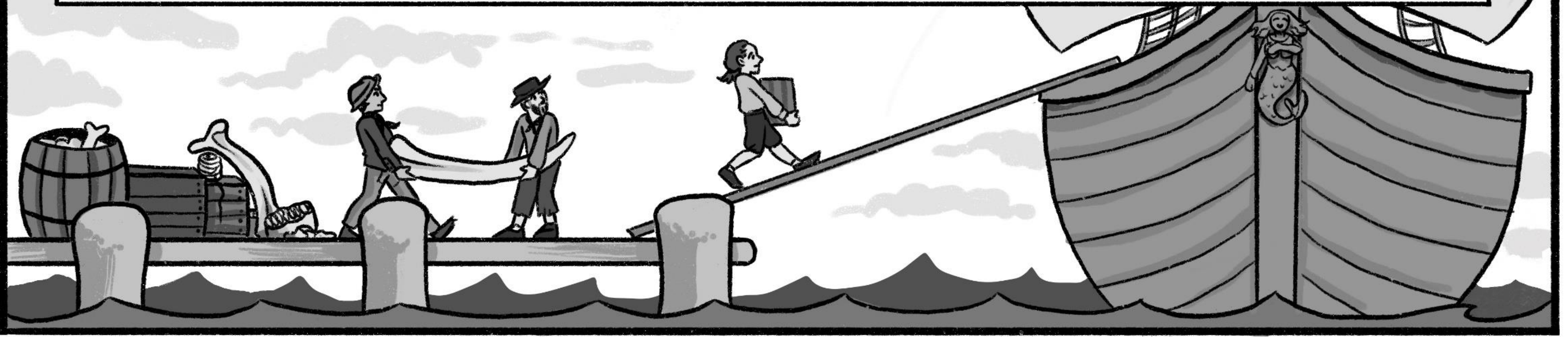


WE CAN RUB THESE IN BUFFON'S FACE!

AND PROVE TO ALL OF EUROPE THAT OUR FELLOW COLONISTS ARE NOT FAILING. WE'RE THRIVING!



AS THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR WAS WAGED, THE THEORY OF AMERICAN DEGENERACY WAS ALWAYS IN THEIR MINDS. SKELETONS OF MAMMOTHS, MASTODONS, AND GIANT GROUND SLOTHS WERE CONSTANTLY BEING MAILED OVERSEAS.



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SPENT A LOT OF TIME DURING THE WAR TRYING TO SECURE AN ALLIANCE IN FRANCE. UNSURPRISINGLY, BUFFON'S THEORY CAUSED SOME DRAMA.



GOOD EVENING, MONSIEUR.

I'M HERE FOR THE REVOLUTION, BUT I'LL GLADLY SET YOU STRAIGHT WHILE I'M AT IT.



UGH. COME TO TRY AND PROVE BUFFON WRONG AGAIN?

THE SCIENCE IS CLEAR. AMERICAN SOIL WILL NEVER GROW **ANYTHING** OR **ANYONE** WITH STRENGTH OR STATURE.

I HAVE A PROPOSAL...



WHY DON'T WE JUST STAND UP AND SEE WHO'S TALLER?

I, WELL, UH...



THEY NEVER DID TAKE FRANKLIN UP ON HIS OFFER.

EVEN GEORGE WASHINGTON HIMSELF PUT THE WAR ON HOLD TO CHECK OUT SOME MASTODON BONES AT A FARM IN NEW YORK.



AND THOMAS JEFFERSON WAS SO MAD ABOUT IT, HE WROTE A WHOLE BOOK! *NOTES ON THE STATE OF VIRGINIA* WAS FULL OF SCIENTIFIC DATA AND WRITINGS ABOUT MASTODONS. IT WAS THE ONLY BOOK HE EVER WROTE.



SOME OTHER, SLIGHTLY MORE IMPORTANT THINGS WERE ALSO HAPPENING THAT YEAR.



GEORGE WASHINGTON WAS LEADING AMERICA TO A MONUMENTOUS VICTORY IN YORKTOWN.

AFTERWARDS, THINGS WERE A LITTLE AWKWARD. THE FIGHTING HAD STOPPED, BUT THE WAR WASN'T OFFICIALLY OVER YET.



SO... WHAT NOW?

I HAVE AN IDEA!

THIS WAY, MEN!



WASHINGTON REVISITED THE FARM FROM BEFORE, LOANING TROOPS TO AN ENEMY OFFICER TO HELP HIM EXCAVATE MORE BONES.



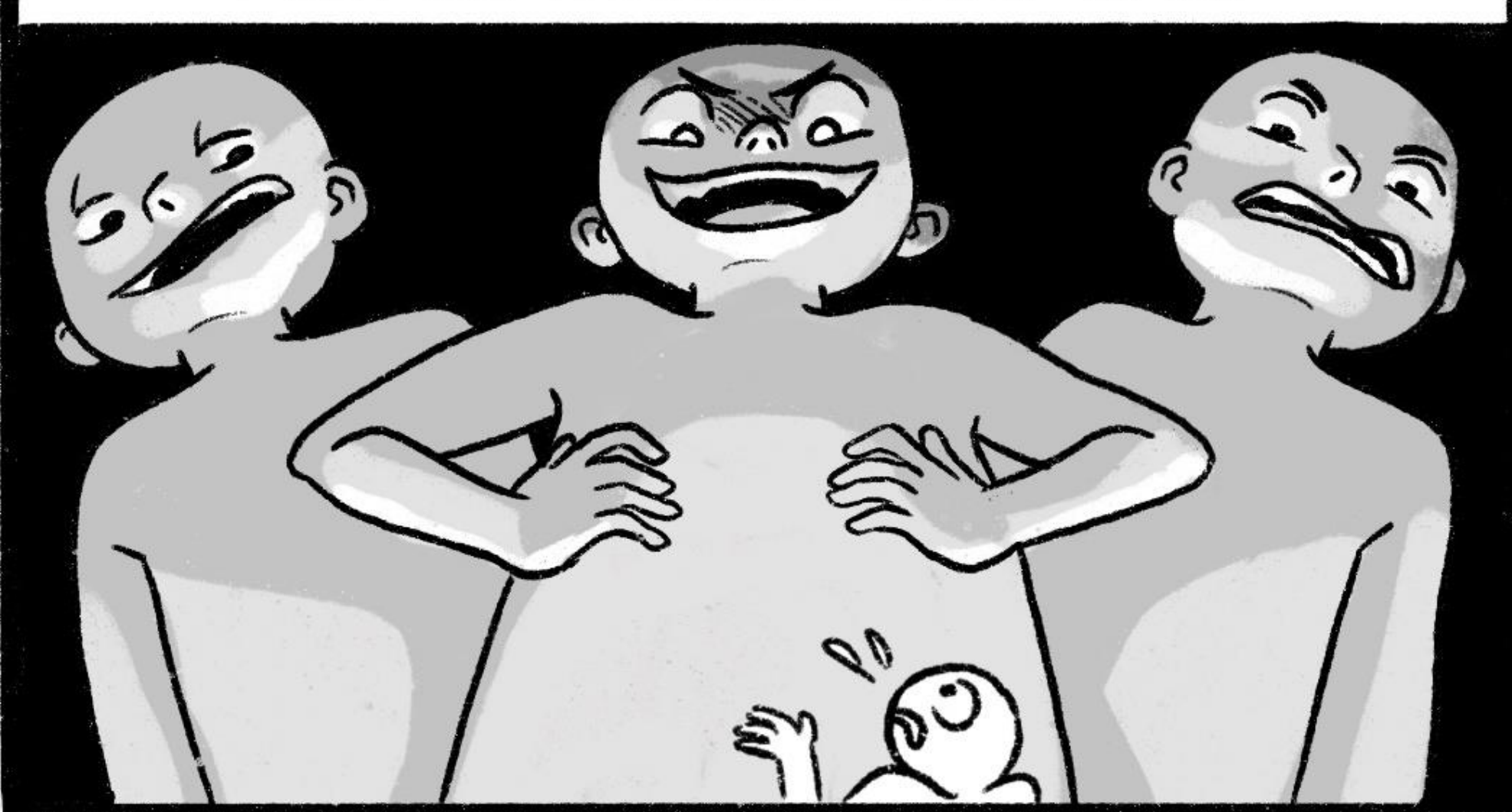
CHARLES WILLSON PEALE, AN ARTIST AND WASHINGTON'S FRIEND, TOOK SKETCHES OF MASTODON FOSSILS IN BETWEEN PAINTING PORTRAITS.

THOMAS JEFFERSON PUT HIS BOOK ON HOLD FOR ANOTHER, MORE FAMOUS DOCUMENT: THE TREATY OF PARIS.



ONCE IT WAS SIGNED, THE WAR WAS OFFICIALLY OVER AND AMERICA WAS A YOUNG NATION.

AND JUST LIKE THE YOUNGEST SIBLING, AMERICA GOT NO RESPECT. OVERSEAS, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN WAS THE ONLY RESPECTED AMERICAN. GUESS WHY PEOPLE THOUGHT THAT WAS?



IF AMERICA'S NOT DEGENERATE, WHY DO THEY ONLY HAVE ONE GENIUS?

ALL RIGHT, THAT IS IT!



THIS TIME, THOMAS JEFFERSON HAD A NEW TRICK UP HIS SLEEVE: A MOOSE!



IT MIGHT NOT BE AN ELEPHANT, BUT IT'S STILL 7 FEET TALL.

THERE WAS ONLY ONE PROBLEM: JEFFERSON DIDN'T HAVE ONE.



DARN.

AND SO...

PLEASE, I NEED A MOOSE! IT'S FOR THE GOOD OF OUR COUNTRY, I SWEAR!

ALL RIGHT, JUST CALM DOWN!



AS IT TURNS OUT, MAILING A DEAD MOOSE ACROSS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN IS TRICKIER THAN IT SOUNDS. THE TROUBLE STARTED OUT WHEN IT WAS SHOT-



WELL, SHOOT.

- 20 MILES FROM THE NEAREST ROAD.

AFTER BEING DRAGGED THROUGH THE FOREST FOR TWO WEEKS, THE MOOSE WAS A MESS.



WEREN'T THERE ANTLERS ON THIS THING EARLIER?

BY THE TIME IT FINALLY ARRIVED IN FRANCE A YEAR LATER, IT LOOKED EVEN WORSE.



WHAT DID BUFFON THINK OF IT? WE'LL NEVER KNOW! HE DIED BEFORE HE COULD COMMENT ON THIS PUTRID MOOSE MESS.

OH, FOR THE LOVE OF-!



RIP
Georges-Louis Leclerc
Comte de Buffon
1707 - 1788

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, THE BONES THAT HAD BEEN SENT TO SCIENTISTS OVERSEAS WERE DISMISSED AS INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE.

IT SEEMED LIKE NOTHING SHORT OF A FULL SKELTON WOULD CHANGE EUROPEAN MINDS.



WHEN GEORGE WASHINGTON WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT A YEAR LATER, FINDING A GIANT SKELETON BECAME A MATTER OF PATRIOTIC PRIDE.



TEN YEARS WENT BY WITHOUT MUCH TURNING UP.



THOMAS JEFFERSON AND MANY OF THE OTHER FOUNDING FATHERS WERE SURE THAT THE FOSSILS THEY NEEDED WERE OUT THERE.



"TO WHATEVER ANIMAL WE ASCRIBE THESE REMAINS..."

"IT IS CERTAIN THAT SUCH A ONE HAS EXISTED IN AMERICA, AND THAT IT HAS BEEN THE LARGEST OF ALL TERRESTRIAL BEINGS."

BUT WITHOUT PROOF, THERE WAS NOTHING THEY COULD DO.

LITTLE DID THEY KNOW THAT THE PROOF WAS RIGHT THERE, JUST WAITING TO BE UNCOVERED.



ONCE AGAIN, IT WAS A FARMER THAT STUMBLED ACROSS THE DISCOVERY.

NEW YORK, 1799

SOON, NEIGHBORS WERE HELPING TEAR THE BONES OUT OF THE GROUND.

WHOOOPS.

CRACK



THE EVENT EVEN MADE NEWSPAPERS!



CHARLES WILLSON PEALE WAS STILL DRAWING BONES, AND HAD EVEN OPENED UP HIS OWN MUSEUM OF ART AND FOSSILS.

JEFFERSON WILL BE EXCITED TO HEAR ABOUT THIS!



YEAH, I'M A LITTLE BUSY BEING THE VICE PRESIDENT SO...



YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO GO ALONE.





SO YOU SEE, THESE BONES ARE TRULY -

NOW HOLD ON THERE, CITY BOY. THIS ISN'T A DONATION.



WOULD \$200 CHANGE YOUR MIND? IT'S ALL I BROUGHT.



I WOULDN'T SAY THAT'S ALL YOU BROUGHT...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



THAT'S AN AWFULLY NICE SHOTGUN YOU'VE GOT THERE.

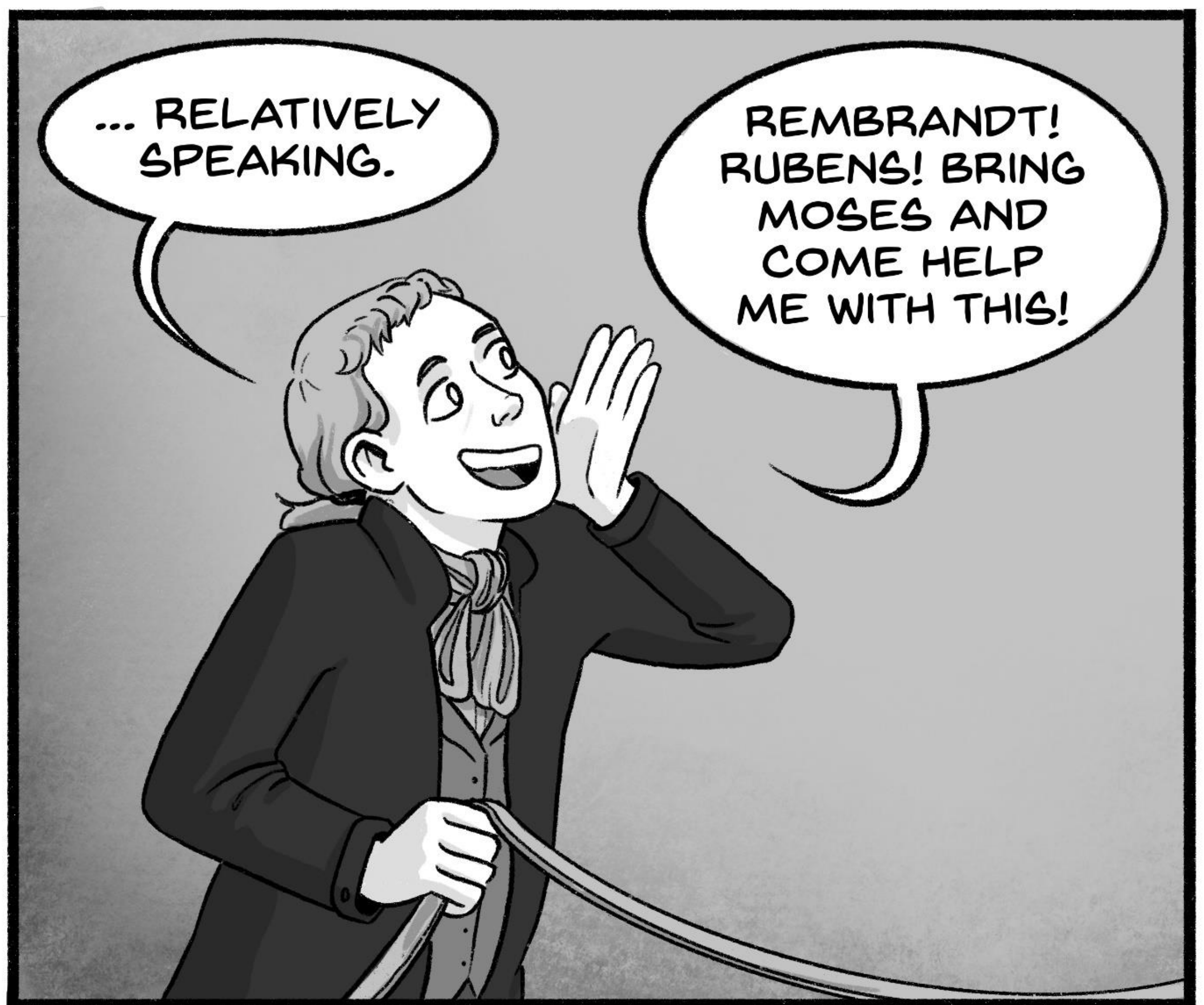
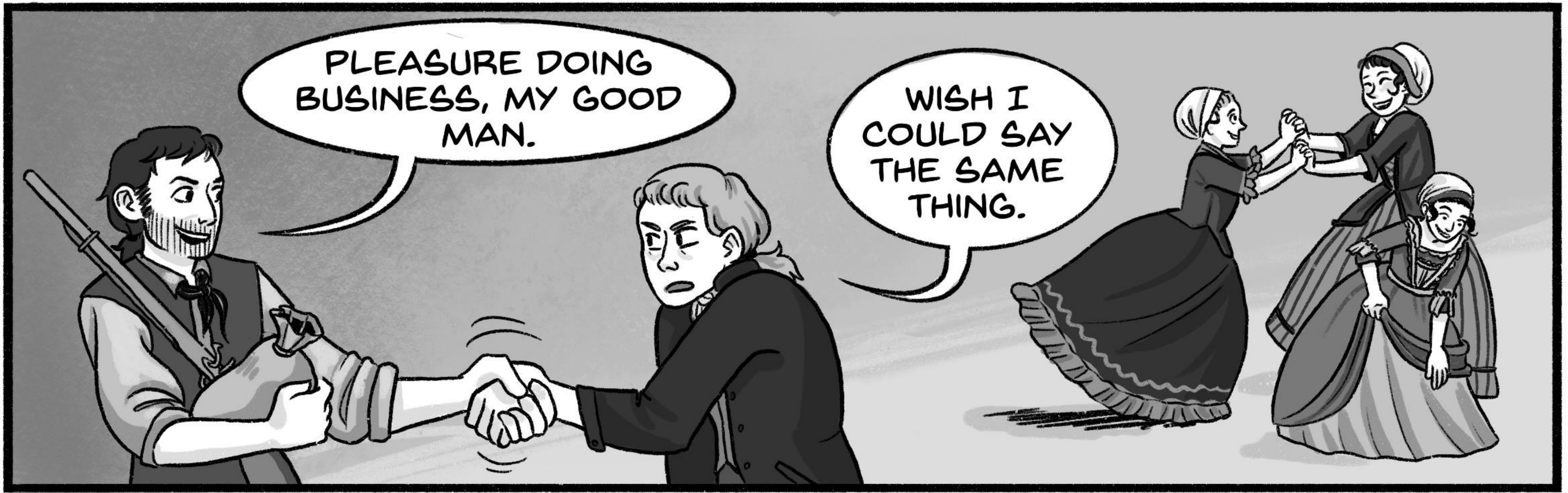
SIGH.



IS THAT ALL?



WELLLLLL... NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, MY DAUGHTERS COULD USE SOME NEW DRESSES, TOO.



AFTER DECADES OF SEARCHING, IT WOULD ONLY TAKE THREE MONTHS TO ASSEMBLE THE SKELETON.



WHAT A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME IN COMPARISON TO HOW LONG IT TOOK FOR THESE FOSSILS TO FORM.

SHORT? MAYBE TO YOU!



MISSING BONES WERE REPLACED WITH WOODEN CARVINGS BY RUBENS AND REMBRANDT PEALE, AS WELL AS ARTIST WILLIAM RUSH.



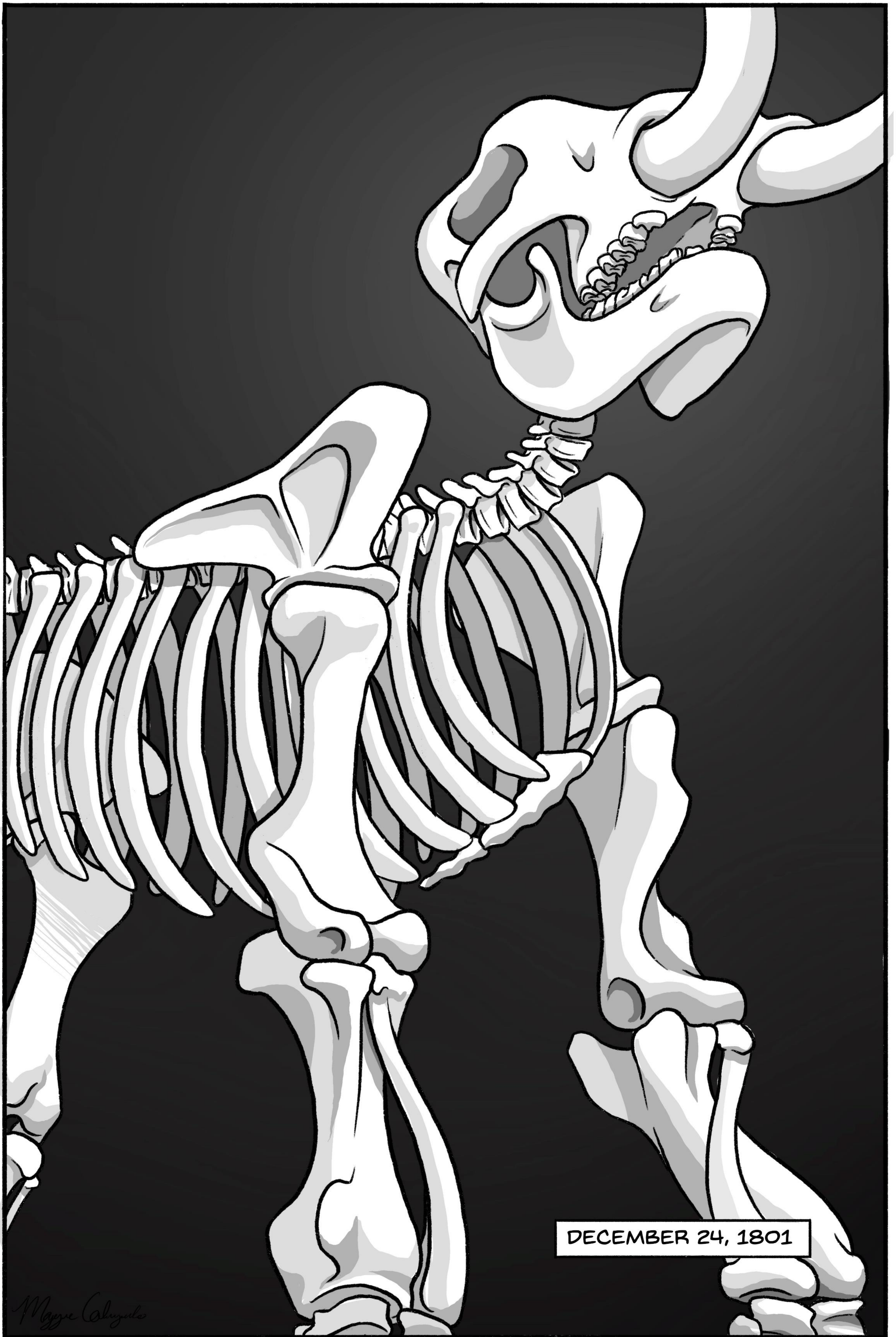
ANOTHER CONTRIBUTOR WAS MOSES WILLIAMS, ENSLAVED BY THE PEALES.

OW! SPLINTER.



IT WOULD BE UNVEILED ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

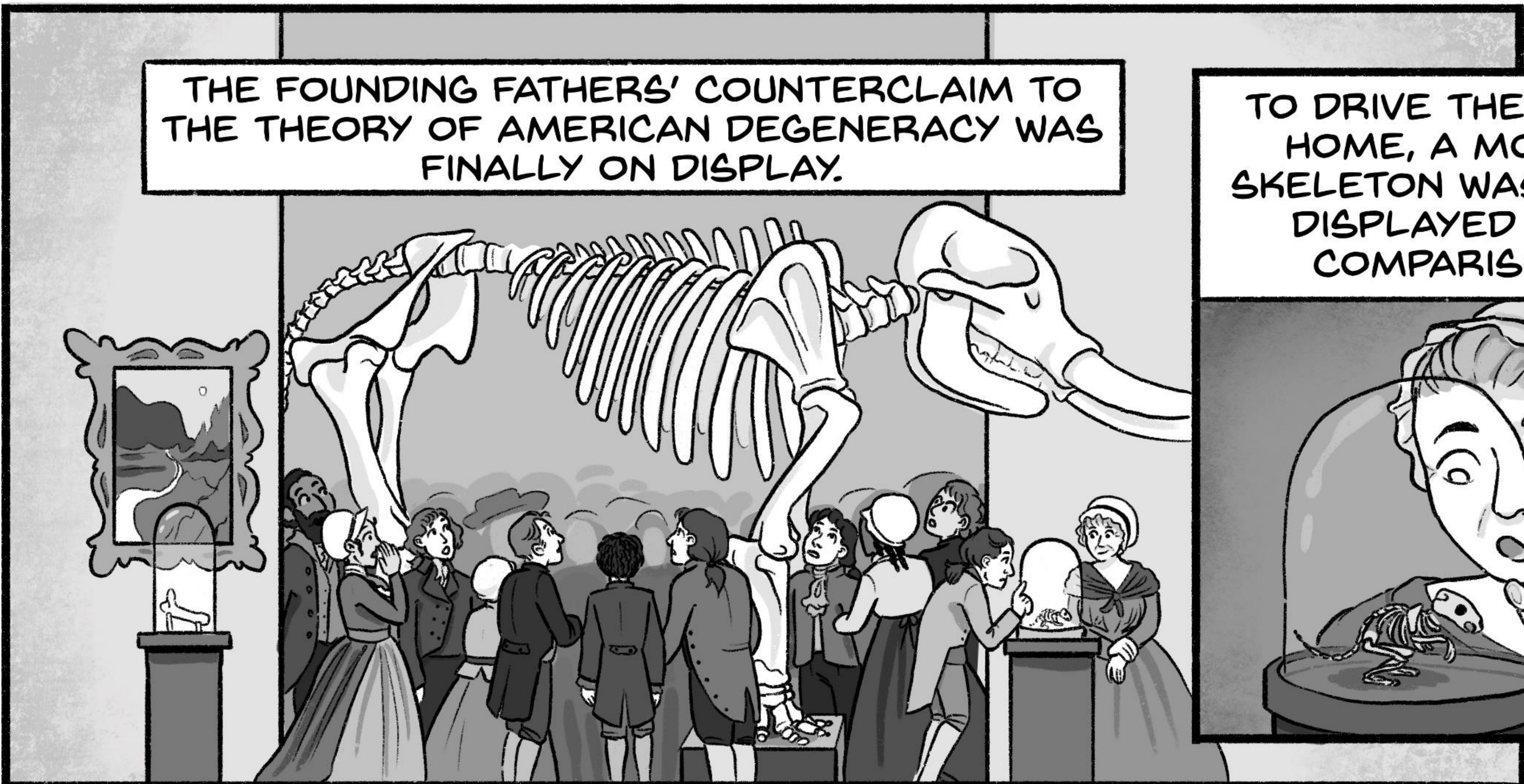




DECEMBER 24, 1801

Mazze Caligula

THE FOUNDING FATHERS' COUNTERCLAIM TO THE THEORY OF AMERICAN DEGENERACY WAS FINALLY ON DISPLAY.



TO DRIVE THE POINT HOME, A MOUSE SKELETON WAS ALSO DISPLAYED FOR COMPARISON.



...NOT THAT THE MASTODON NEEDED IT.



THE PUBLIC WAS SUITABLY IMPRESSED.

"A HUMAN BEING SHRINKS INTO SIGNIFICANCE BESIDE THE BONY FRAGMENT OF THIS ENORMOUS ANTEDILUVIAN."

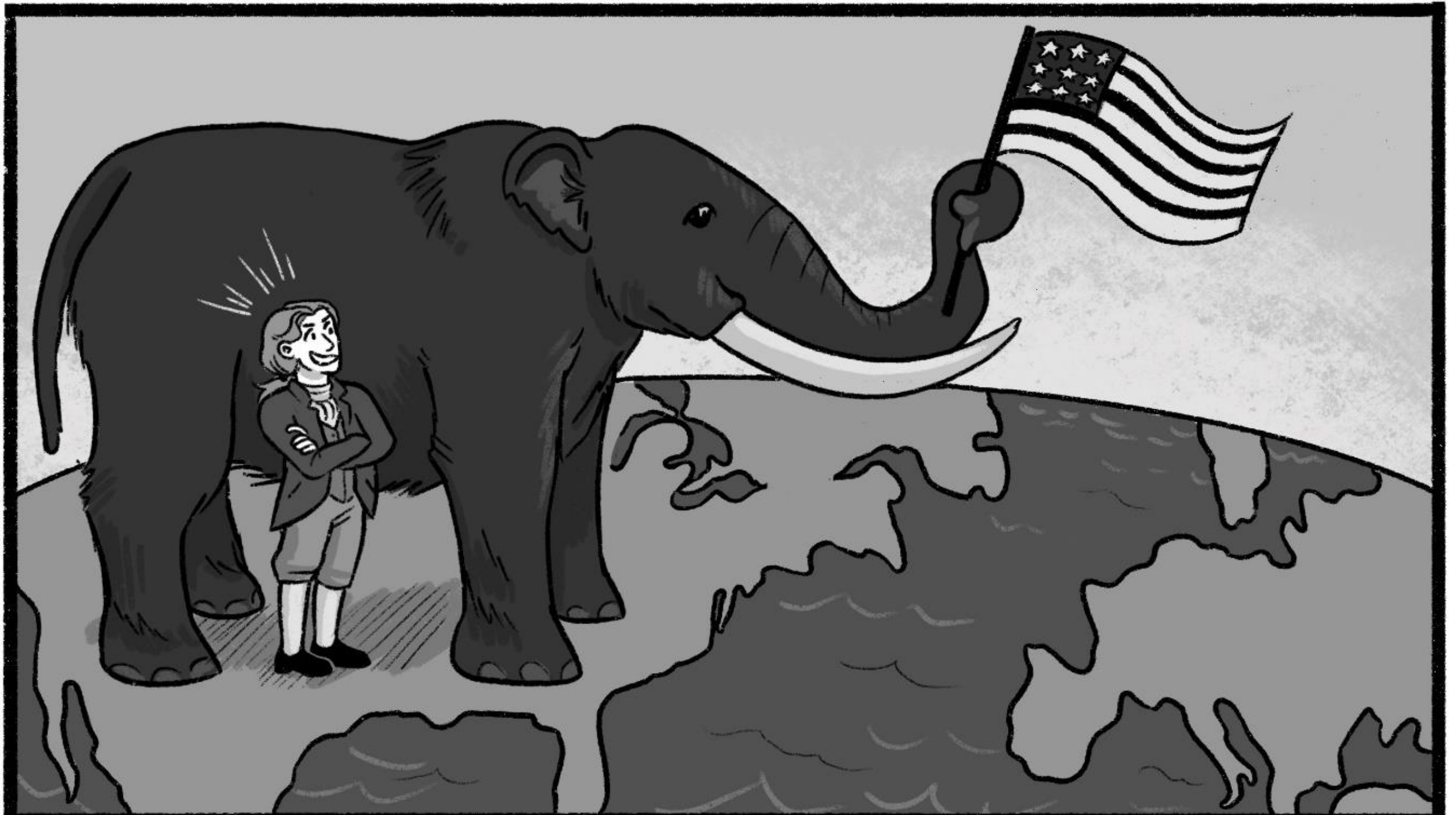
ANTE-WHAT NOW?



IT MADE SUCH AN IMPRESSION THAT, ACCORDING TO VISITORS AT THE TIME, SOME HAD TO GO HOME AND LIE DOWN.



THE MASTODON WAS SO POPULAR, IT SPARKED A "MAMMOTH MANIA" AND DOUBLED THE MUSEUM'S REVENUE.



BUT THE TRUE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EXHIBIT WAS THAT AFTER A MOOSE DISASTER, DECADES OF WORK AND A LOT OF DIGGING, JEFFERSON'S ARGUMENT WAS FINALLY PROVEN!

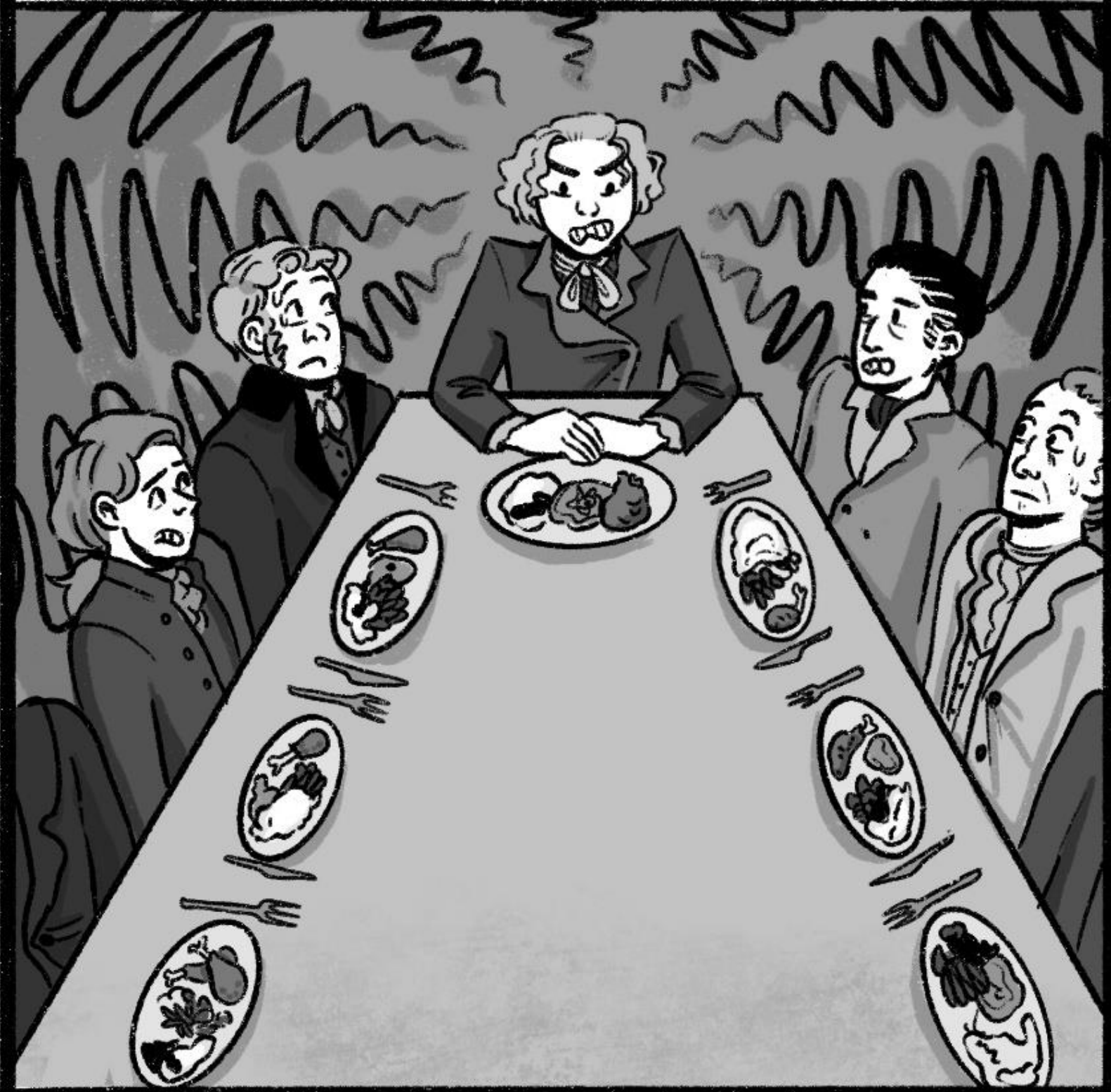
JEFFERSON WAS PLEASED TO HEAR ABOUT THE MASTODON'S SUCCESS, TO SAY THE LEAST.



BUT NOT EVERYONE SHARED HIS EXCITEMENT.



TO COUNTERACT GOSSIP IN THE WHITE HOUSE, REMBRANDT PEALE INVITED THIRTEEN PUBLIC FIGURES TO A *VERY* POINTED DINNER.



A TOAST!

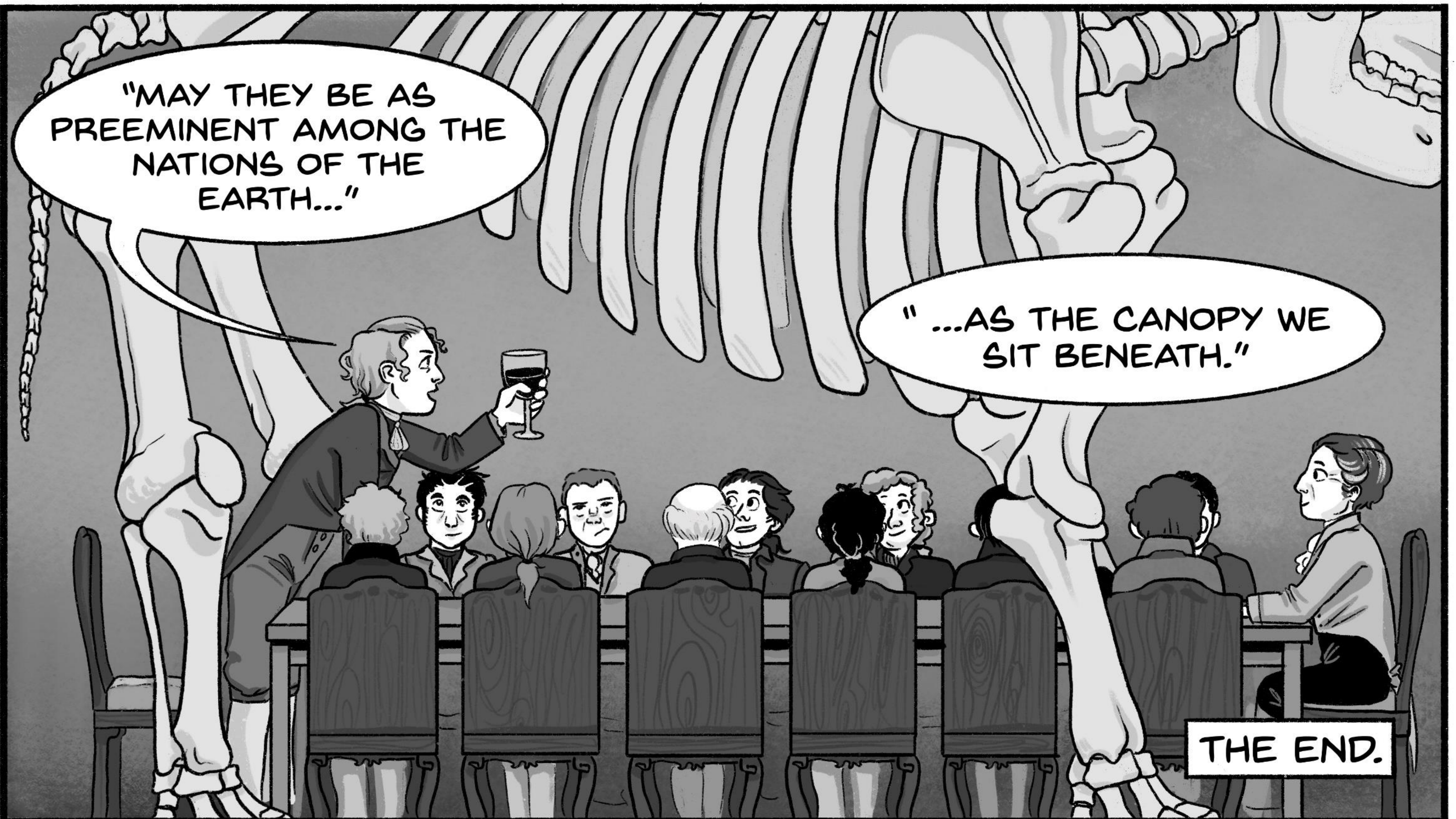


TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:



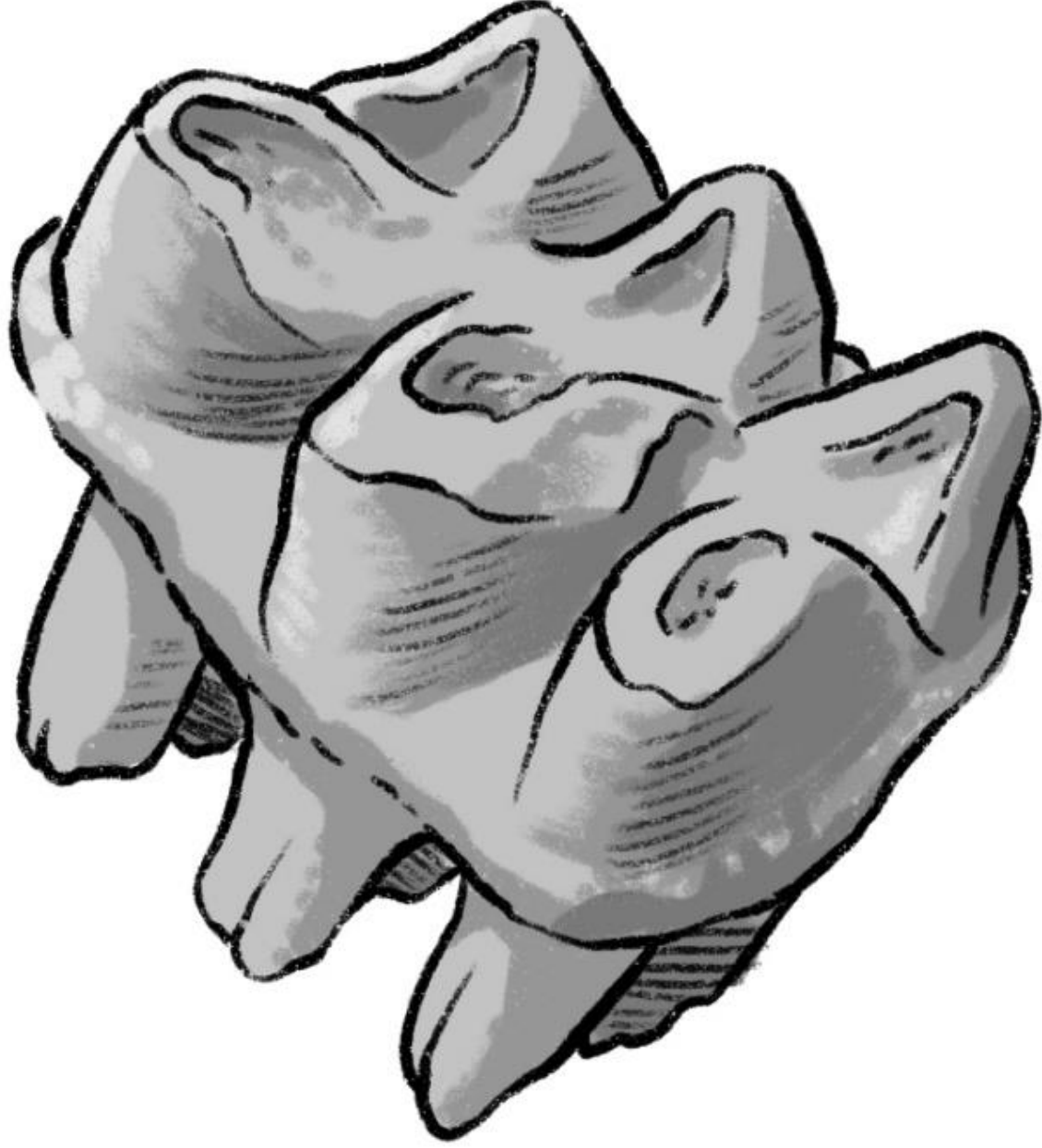
"MAY THEY BE AS PREEMINENT AMONG THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH..."

"...AS THE CANOPY WE SIT BENEATH."

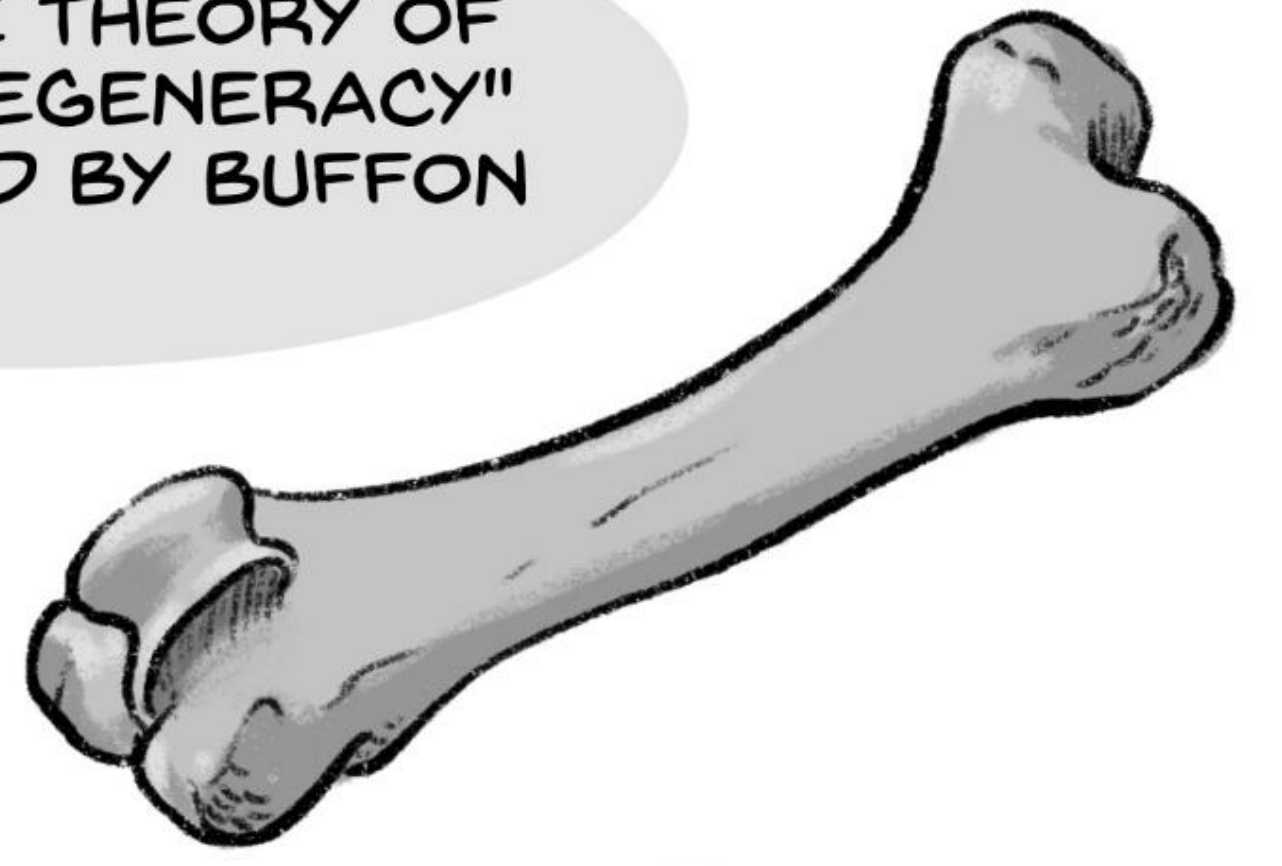


THE END.

1705- THE LARGE TOOTH OF A MYSTERIOUS ANIMAL WAS FOUND NEAR CLAVERACK, NEW YORK. IT WAS USED AS A DRINKING VESSEL IN A LOCAL TAVERN



1755- "THE THEORY OF AMERICAN DEGENERACY" IS PUBLISHED BY BUFFON



1776- THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WAS WRITTEN AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR BEGAN

1783- THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR ENDED WITH THE SIGNING OF THE TREATY OF PARIS

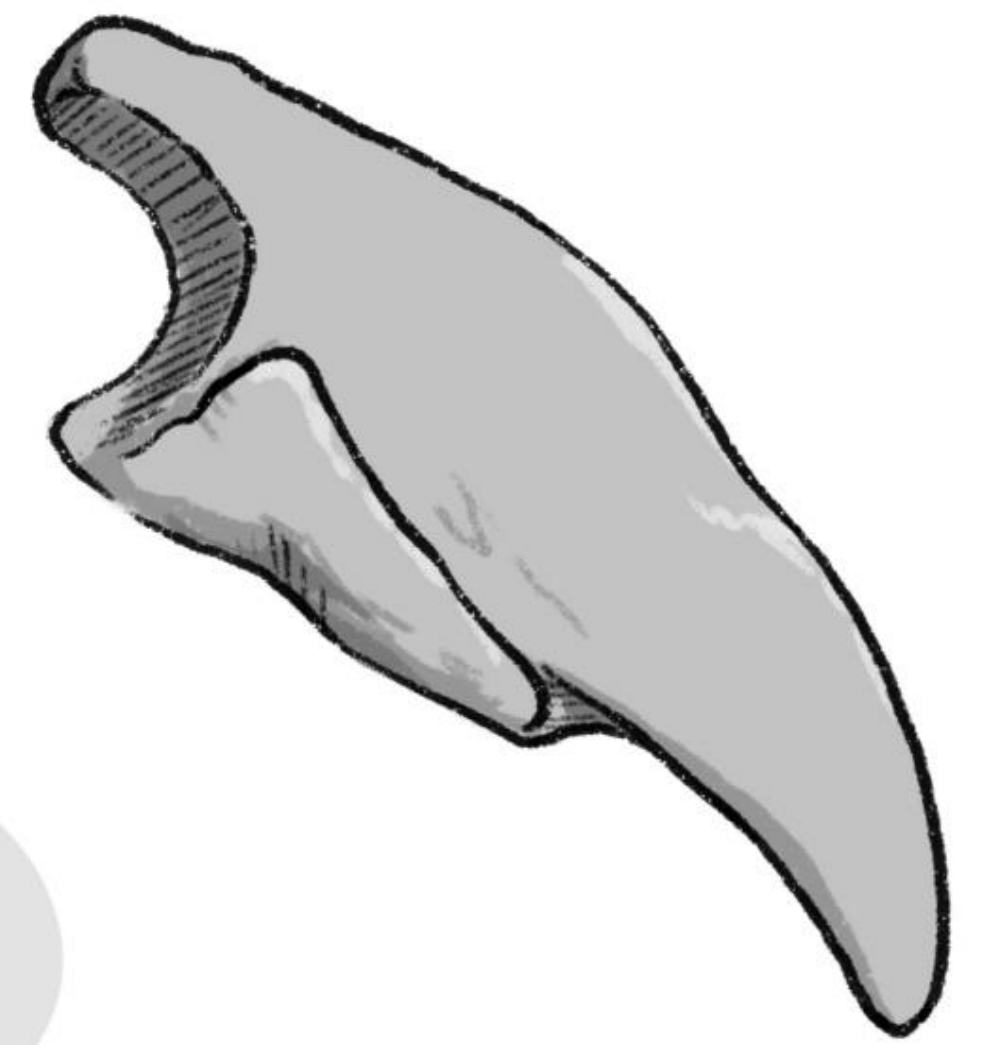
1784- JEFFERSON SAILED TO PARIS WITH AN "UNCOMMONLY LARGE PARTNER SKIN" TO SHOW BUFFON

1786- PEALE OPENED THE FIRST MAJOR AMERICAN MUSEUM IN HIS HOUSE CONTAINING ART, TAXIDERMIED ANIMALS, AND FOSSILS

1788- JEFFERSON'S MOOSE ARRIVED IN INCREDIBLY POOR CONDITION AT BUFFON'S HOME IN FRANCE, ALONG WITH ANTLERS FROM A DIFFERENT ANIMAL TO REPLACE THE ORIGINALS THAT WERE LOST

1789- NOTES ON THE STATE OF VIRGINIA, JEFFERSON'S BOOK, HELPED TO MAKE THE MASTODON A NATIONAL SYMBOL

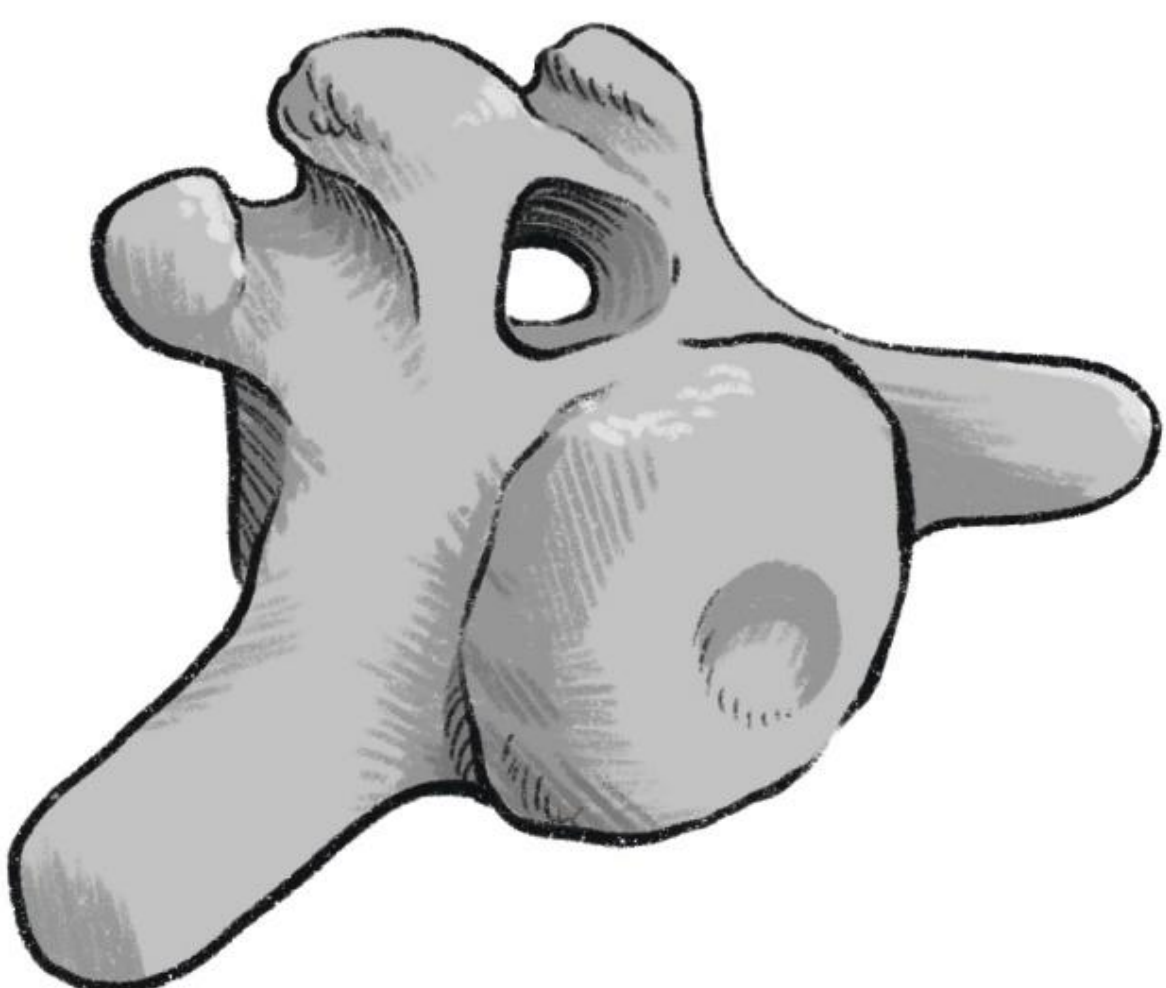
1789- GEORGE WASHINGTON IS INAUGURATED AS THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES



1796- THE FIRST GIANT GROUND SLOTH BONES WERE SENT TO JEFFERSON WHICH HE MISTOOK FOR THE BONES OF A GIANT LION. HE NAMED THE BEAST MEGALONYX, OR "GREAT CLAW"

1799- A MASTODON SKELETON WAS DISCOVERED BY A FARMER IN ORANGE COUNTY, NEW YORK

1801- PEALE AND HIS SONS REMBRANDT AND RAPHAEL FITTED SKELETONS TOGETHER WITH INPUT FROM ENSLAVED SERVANT MOSES WILLIAMS AND ARTIST WILLIAM RUSH



1804- LEWIS AND CLARK EXPLORED THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE, WITH INSTRUCTIONS FROM JEFFERSON TO FIND LIVING MASTODONS OR GIANT GROUND SLOTHS.

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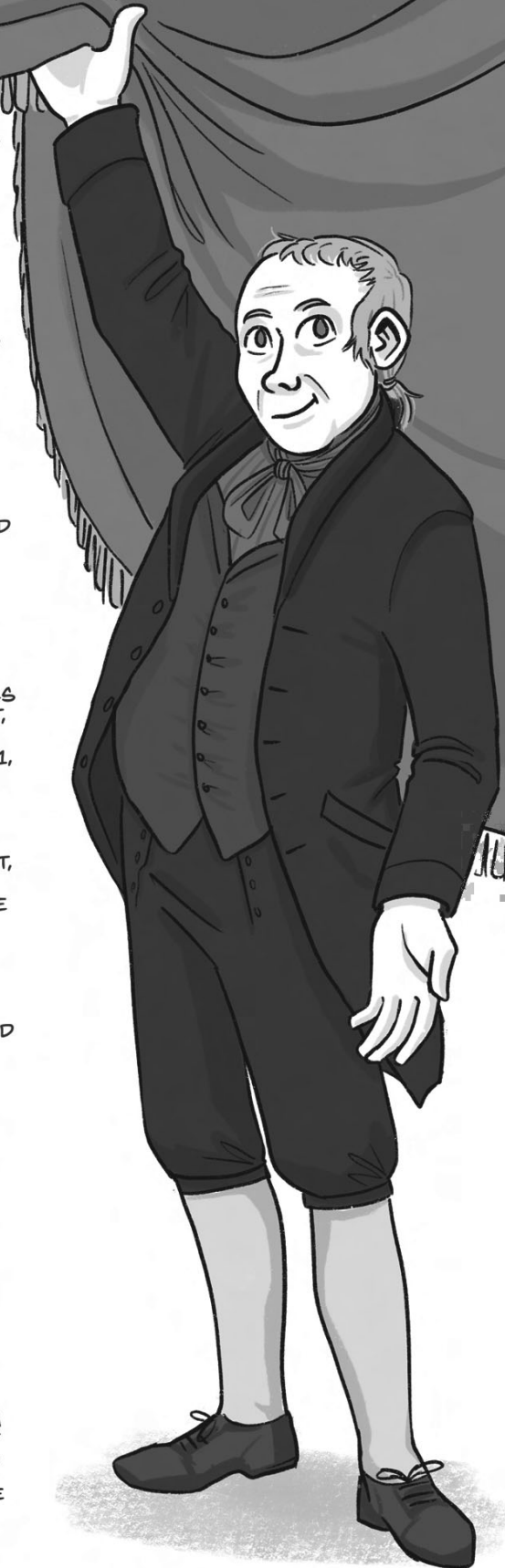
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MASTODON MANIA!

DISCOVER THE FORGOTTEN QUEST OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS TO FIND A FEARSOME AND GIGANTIC BEAST THAT ONCE ROAMED AMERICA FROM SHORE TO SHORE. THIS TRUE STORY FOLLOWS THE DESPERATE SEARCH FOR THE FOSSILS OF A MYSTERIOUS ANIMAL THAT GRIPPED AMERICA'S ATTENTION EVEN AS THE COUNTRY FOUGHT FOR FREEDOM DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR. THOMAS JEFFERSON, GEORGE WASHINGTON, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, AND ARTIST CHARLES WILSON PEALE WERE ALL KEY PLAYERS IN THIS QUEST TO FIND THE BONES OF THE "AMERICAN INCOGNITUM."

