

The Mammoth Problem Heats Up

in Yakutsk, perhaps the coldest city
on earth and home of one-fifth
of the world's diamonds and a cosmic
ray detector where (sensibly) they also
study how to construct buildings
on permanently frozen ground

last week they found a woolly mammoth
so well-preserved that her blood still
flowed red and her flesh was pink
and juicy (as soon as it was thawed out)

so next week in New York's best
restaurants there will be a chef's special
mammoth flank steak au poivre or au jus
with an aioli of ten-thousand-year-old
hand-pressed garlic and a side of steamed
Neanderthal-sourced horsetail reeds

and in homes across America, kids
will have Stouffer's Flash-Frozen
Mesolithic Mammoth Tenders™ in
plastic containers you can just pop
into the microwave and heat on high
for three or four minutes and TVs
will blare: "Mom, your kids'll just love
to pop 'em in the 'wave and then pop 'em
in their mouth for a taste of a real
Caveman Diet™!! Full of antioxidants too!!"

soon after that on eBay there will be
auctions of genuine mammoth-tusk
billiard balls (the blogs will say "freeze
your opponent right out of the game")
with a certificate of authenticity from
the American Museum of Natural History
and a Buy-It-Now price of only three
thousand dollars each (plus insurance)

and Steinway or Yamaha will crank out
a precious few Billy-Joel-signature baby
grands with mammoth-ivory keys that will
"make your glissandos slide across the keys
like mammoth butter" (Billy's testimonial)
offering ice-aged mammoth femurs
for the legs and mammoth toenails
for the pedals for only a million or so—
plus shipping and handling and tax—
and then (when they sell like kayaks
on the Lena River in January) they'll
give one away to the lucky winner
of the Exxon Guess-the-Speed-of-
Climate-Change™ Sweepstakes
(co-sponsored by BP and the EPA)

and in due time in Shanghai or Palo Alto
there will be a lab focusing on cloning
the creature so you can own your very own
baby woolly mammoth at home—or at least
have one kept for you (at reasonable cost)
at a nearby artificial tundra park

but then (sadly) Yakutsk will be overrun
with snowmobile tours promising mammoth
sightings on the banks of the Lena and views
of the statue honoring Stalin for opening up
the job market by shipping people and borscht
to the diamond mines and there will be snow-
sculpture contests and ididarods and vodka-
drinking contests and then the demand for
mammoth meat will way outstrip the supply
and the whole place will freeze up once again

and life in Siberia will return to normal