

THE FAITHFUL DOG
This guard dog found at the house of Vesonius Primus died at his post, still tethered by a chain attached to his bronze collar.

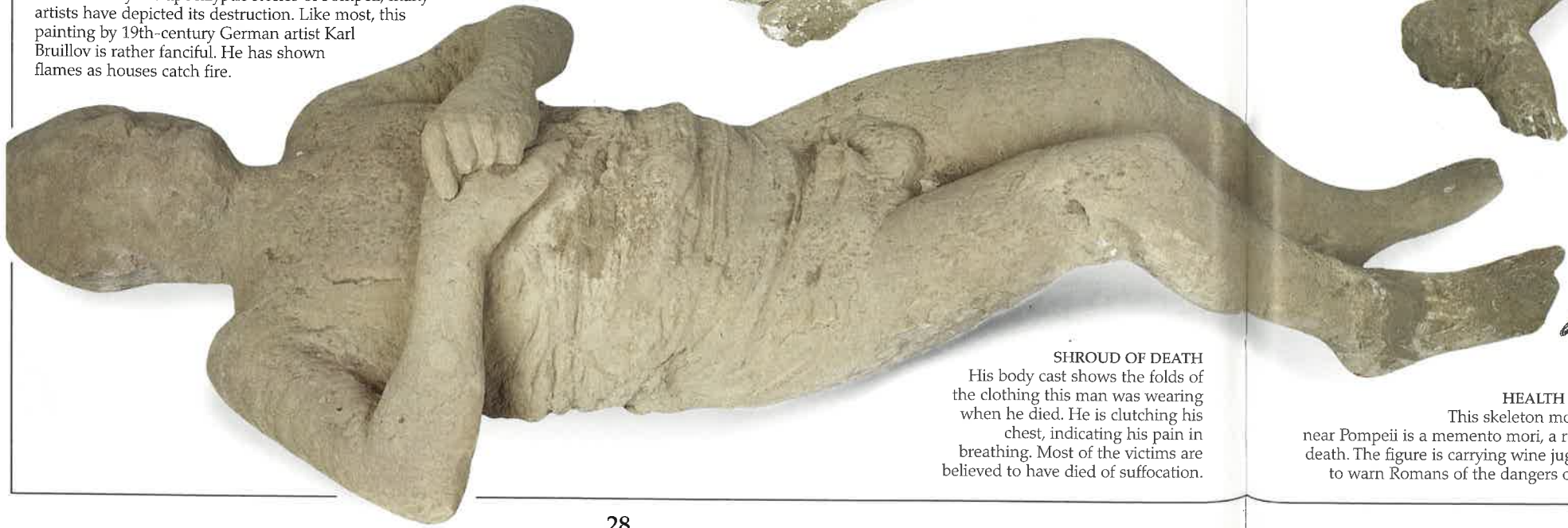


Caught in the act of dying

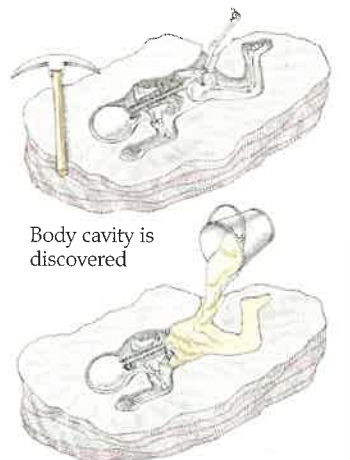
Over 2,000 people died in Pompeii when the eruption of Mount Vesuvius overwhelmed the Roman town. We know about these Roman citizens from plaster casts that show them at the moment of their death. As the fleeing Pompeiians died, the rain of ash and pumice set around their bodies rather like wet cement. With time, the soft body parts decayed and the ash and pumice turned to solid rock. The shapes of the dead Romans' bodies were left as hollows in the rock. Only the hard bones remained inside the hollows. In 1860, the Italian king appointed Giuseppe Fiorelli as director of the excavations. Fiorelli started the first systematic, large-scale excavations of the ancient city. He also invented a method for removing the skeletons from the body hollows and filling the space with wet plaster of Paris. After the plaster hardened, a true representation of the bodies could be dug out of the volcanic rock. Many of these startling casts show people grimacing, trying to hide, or huddling together in terror. Excavations at Pompeii continue today, and Fiorelli's method is still used whenever new bodies are unearthed. It has also been used to make casts of animals, trees, doors, furniture, and cart wheels.



LAST DAY OF POMPEII
Fascinated by the apocalyptic stories of Pompeii, many artists have depicted its destruction. Like most, this painting by 19th-century German artist Karl Bruilov is rather fanciful. He has shown flames as houses catch fire.



SHROUD OF DEATH
His body cast shows the folds of the clothing this man was wearing when he died. He is clutching his chest, indicating his pain in breathing. Most of the victims are believed to have died of suffocation.



Body cavity is discovered
Cavity is filled with wet plaster of Paris



Cast of suffocated baby, found in the Garden of the Fugitives



Cast of man who died shielding his face with his hands

Part of woman's skull shows through cast



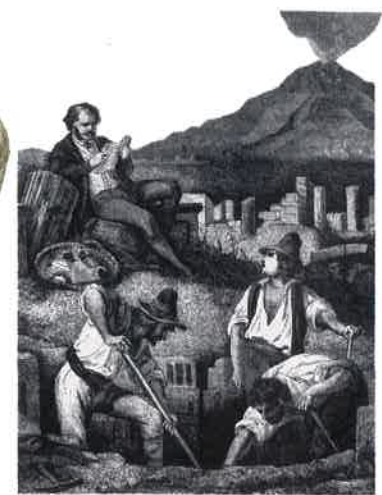
MOTHER AND CHILD
This mother was trying to shield her child when they were overcome by the searing ash and gas. They were found together with several other families in the Garden of the Fugitives.



KILLED ON DUTY
When the American writer Mark Twain visited Pompeii, he was most impressed by the remains of a soldier who had stayed at his post "till the hell that raged around him burned out the dauntless spirit it could not conquer."



HEALTH WARNING
This skeleton mosaic found near Pompeii is a memento mori, a reminder of death. The figure is carrying wine jugs, perhaps to warn Romans of the dangers of drinking.



Fiorelli takes detailed notes while supervising an excavation

Pyroclastic flow deposit
Pyroclastic surge deposits
Ash and lapilli

ROCK LAYERS
Pompeii was buried by 2 m (6 ft) of ash and lapilli, then two pyroclastic surges and a large flow.

