

For Tegen.
Because brilliant editors never get the credit they deserve.
M.R.

For the Duck Duck Moose group x
G.W.



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The British
Museum



Matt Ralphs • Gordy Wright

SECRETS of the DEAD



**Mummies and Other Human Remains
from Around the World**

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Tutankhamun

In November 1922, British archaeologist Howard Carter peered through a hole in the sealed doorway of a tomb. As his eyes adjusted to the dark chamber beyond, he saw a vast collection of extraordinary and beautiful objects. Carter's companion asked, "Can you see anything?" Carter replied, "Yes, wonderful things!"



Carter had discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun who, in 1333 BC, became King of Egypt at the age of about nine. He died only ten years later. In paintings from his tomb he hunts wild animals and fights battles in his chariot; his stunning golden funerary mask shows a handsome, noble face. But art is not always true to life, so we need to examine his mummy to discover who he really was.

Tutankhamun's fragile remains were damaged during examination in the 1920s. Nowadays, by using computers and X-ray machines, scientists have learned far more about the boy king without even touching him. Their studies revealed a very different person to the energetic warrior king shown in the paintings. Tutankhamun was slender, with narrow shoulders and wide hips.

Tutankhamun appears to have suffered from a bone disease that deformed his toes and caused his left foot to twist inward. Walking may have been extremely painful, and it's likely he used a stick to get around. Some experts think that he also had malaria, a disease spread by mosquito bites that causes periods of nausea, headaches and fever.



Scans show that at some point Tutankhamun fractured his left thigh, perhaps during a fall. We cannot be sure, but it's possible Tutankhamun's early death was caused by the malaria, the fracture, an infection, or a combination of all these factors.



Many objects inside the tomb were decorated with the 'Wedjat', or the 'Eye of Horus', which was a symbol of protection and good health.



A pair of sandals were found with portraits of Tutankhamun's enemies on the soles.



130 sticks were found in the tomb. Some were for walking, and others for killing snakes.



An iron dagger with an ornamental golden sheath was discovered and is thought to be made from a fallen meteorite.

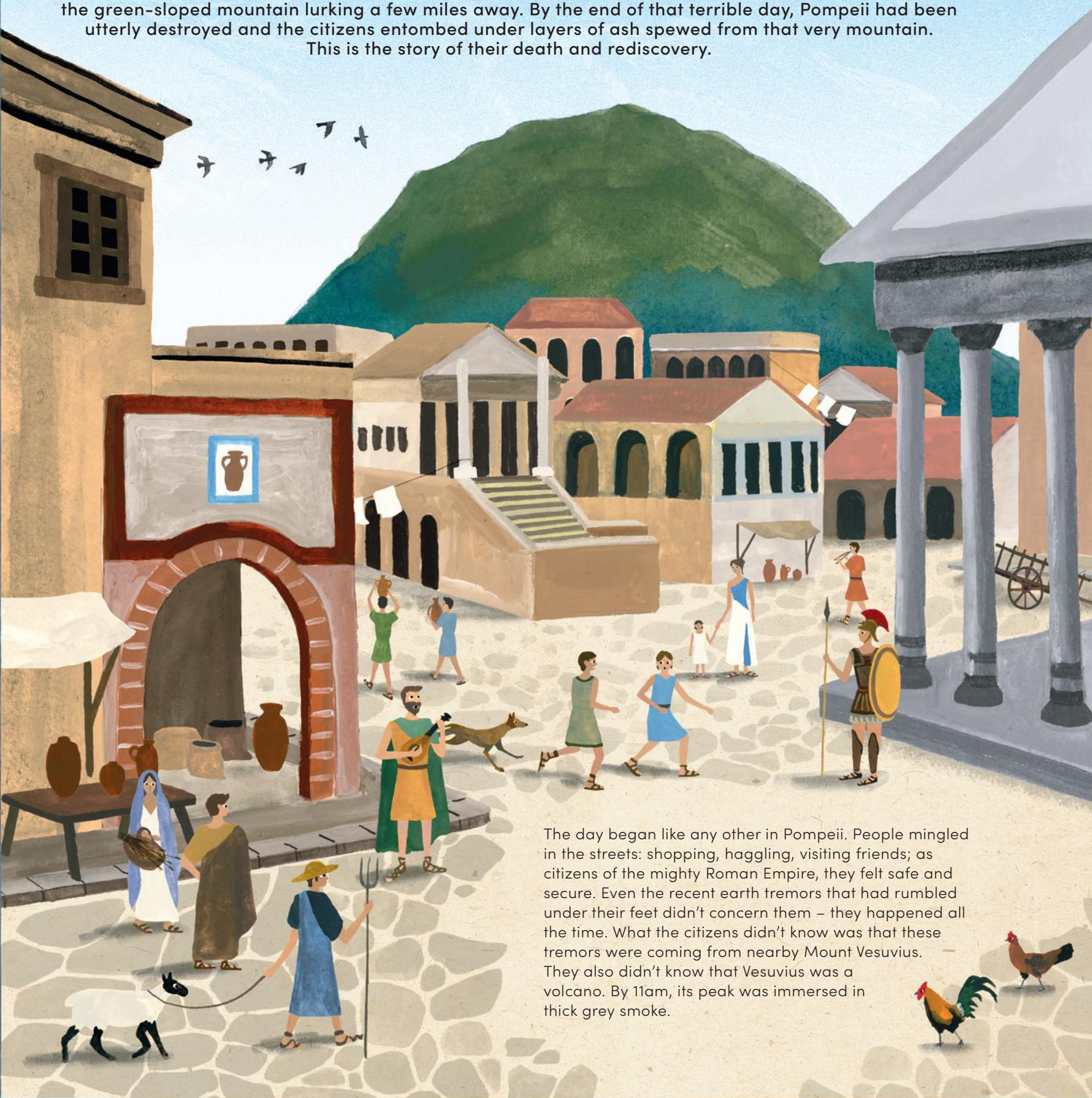
Several beautiful 'pectorals' were found in the tomb. They were large pieces of jewellery worn on the chest.



Known throughout the world, Tutankhamun is more famous today than he was when he was alive. People travel from all over the world to gaze at the fragile and fascinating remains of a young man who, 3,300 years ago, was the ruler of one of the most powerful civilisations on the planet.

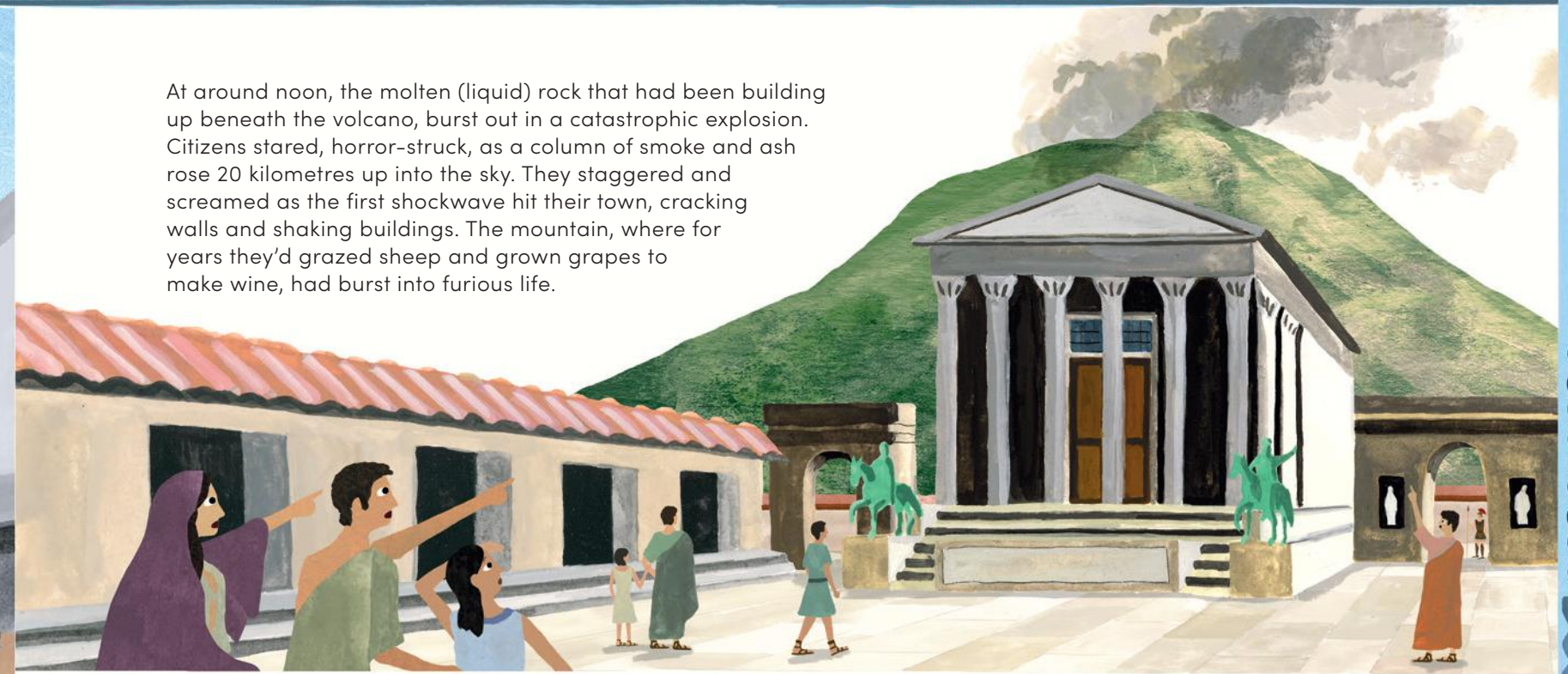
The Plaster Citizens of Pompeii

One day in the year 79 AD, the people of Pompeii – a bustling coastal town in the heart of the Roman Empire – were overcome by tragedy. For years they had lived there, never giving much thought to the green-sloped mountain lurking a few miles away. By the end of that terrible day, Pompeii had been utterly destroyed and the citizens entombed under layers of ash spewed from that very mountain. This is the story of their death and rediscovery.



The day began like any other in Pompeii. People mingled in the streets: shopping, haggling, visiting friends; as citizens of the mighty Roman Empire, they felt safe and secure. Even the recent earth tremors that had rumbled under their feet didn't concern them – they happened all the time. What the citizens didn't know was that these tremors were coming from nearby Mount Vesuvius. They also didn't know that Vesuvius was a volcano. By 11am, its peak was immersed in thick grey smoke.

At around noon, the molten (liquid) rock that had been building up beneath the volcano, burst out in a catastrophic explosion. Citizens stared, horror-struck, as a column of smoke and ash rose 20 kilometres up into the sky. They staggered and screamed as the first shockwave hit their town, cracking walls and shaking buildings. The mountain, where for years they'd grazed sheep and grown grapes to make wine, had burst into furious life.



Smoke spread over their heads, turning the sky black at a frightening speed. The sun disappeared. Hot ash fell within minutes, choking, burning and smothering every surface. It piled into drifts, clogged doors, filled courtyards and poured through windows. Burning rocks travelling at high speed shattered roofs and started countless fires. To the panicked citizens of Pompeii, it must have felt as if their world was ending.

The world had turned pitch-black. Ash and rocks fell for hours. Citizens huddled under stairs or in cellars. The heat was intense, the air unbreathable.

By 11pm, the dense black column suspended over the volcano was 27 kilometres high; millions of tonnes of ash held in the air by the intense heat, gathered above the volcano's gaping mouth. As the temperature cooled, the column collapsed under its own immense weight. This was the end for Pompeii.



Surviving citizens had no idea that super-heated air, volcanic gas, rocks and ash were avalanching down the volcano's slopes and hurtling towards them. Barrelling along at 100 kilometres per hour, these roaring grey waves swallowed and smashed everything in their path. Anyone left in Pompeii was instantly killed and buried under metres of ash. By dawn, Pompeii and her people had disappeared.

Lady Xin Zhui

Lady Xin Zhui died and was buried in 163 BC. Ancient Egyptians were still preserving their dead at this time, but where their mummies are now dry husks, Xin Zhui still has soft flesh, flexible skin and blood-filled veins; her muscles still move, her limbs bend and every organ is intact.

What caused this ancient Chinese noblewoman to be so well-preserved?

Xin Zhui lived during the ancient Chinese Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), a golden period of cultural, technological and economic development. As a wealthy member of the ruling class, Xin Zhui led a life of luxurious extravagance. An army of servants saw to her every need, and each day she feasted on rich food. But Xin Zhui paid a price for this lifestyle, and when she died at the age of around 50 she was overweight and in poor health.

Xin Zhui's body is over 2,000 years old, but its condition is similar to someone who has only recently died: her skin, flesh and muscles are moist; her hair, eardrums and eyelashes intact. Scientific examinations revealed that she suffered from heart disease and bad blood circulation – conditions created by a fat-rich diet and lack of exercise. Bones in her spine had fused together, causing great pain and forcing her to walk with a stick. Undigested melon seeds in her stomach indicate that she died – probably from a heart attack – only 2–3 hours after eating them.

The coffin was covered with a silk funeral banner, showing Xin Zhui preparing to enter the afterlife.



Xin Zhui received a lavish and expensive burial. After being washed, her body was dressed in robes, wrapped in 20 layers of silk and laid in the smallest of four painted and varnished coffins, one fitting inside the other. These four 'nesting' coffins were then lowered into a wood-lined burial chamber 12 metres underground. The chamber was sealed with a wooden roof and bamboo mats, then covered in layers of sand, charcoal, clay and soil. Scientists believe it was this tomb design that ensured Xin Zhui's body didn't decompose; the water- and air-tight layers protected her body from decay-causing bacteria, which led to her remarkable preservation.



Beautiful silk robes were found folded inside her tomb.



Lady Xin Zhui's make-up would have been made by boiling and fermenting plants, spices and animal fats.



As well as baskets of food, Lady Xin Zhui was buried with recipes of her favourite meals.



The fingerless mittens found in the tomb were made from expensive silk.

Xin Zhui's tomb was packed with over 1,000 items, including silk robes, fingerless mittens, make-up boxes, musical instruments, plates, bowls and vases. A huge variety of food was placed in carefully labelled bamboo containers: strawberries, pears, dates, plums, pork, venison, beef, lamb, hare, dog, goose, duck, chicken, turtledove, pheasant, sparrow, fish, eggs, and even owl; Xin Zhui would eat as well in death as she had in life.

