



The 13th Element: The Sordid Tale of Murder, Fire, and Phosphorus

John Emsley

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The incredible "glowing" history of the "Devil's element" phosphorus

Discovered by alchemists, prescribed by apothecaries, exploited by ninth-century industrialists, and abused by twentieth-century combatants, the chemical element phosphorus has fascinated us for more than three centuries. It may even be the cause of will-o'-the-wisps and spontaneous human combustion! Now John Emsley has written an enthralling account of this eerily luminescent element. Shining with wonderful nuggets—from murders-by-phosphorus to a match factory strike; from the firebombing of Hamburg to the deadly compounds derived from phosphorus today—The 13th Element weaves together a rich tableau of brilliant and oddball characters, social upheavals, and bizarre events.

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