

Praseodymium (#59, Pr)

Janet Kuypers

"I once set fire to my fingernail.

I wanted my finger to be a human candle."

She dropped another match into her glass. The flame sizzled in the drops of drink at the bottom.

In a corner booth, in this small club the flame she aroused looked like any other table light.
But if you looked too closely, the light would scorch your soul, would burn your eyes hollow.
That little piece of energy she held could be so intense that you needed that Praseodymium in your eye glasses just to look for another second.

The flame she aroused looked like any other light, but she knew she was destined for the big screen, complete with studio lighting and projector lights from the motion picture industry broadcasting her to the world through arc lights.

So she struck another match at the side of the box. Six or seven lay on the cocktail napkin, ten more at the bottom of the glass. She'd watch the reflection of the gemstones in rings across her fingertips reflecting that flame. The yellow-green cubic zirconia on each of her fingers bounced the light of the flame in thousands of directions.

She likes gemstones on her rings, she doesn't bother with big earrings or expensive necklaces she looks at her hands because she likes rings; she can't help it.

A few of those peridot-inspired stones were gifts from a loved one, because they knew they were dying soon. So she becomes the only one treating these rings live gravestones, even when no one has even died yet.

And the person that gave her these rings, she knows they want to be cremated.

Just then you could see the flame dancing at her fingertip.

She shook the match. She dropped it in her glass.

Darmstadtium (#110, **Ds**)

Janet Kuypers

Element one one zero in the periodic Table, Darmstadtium, originally didn't have a name, so when the scientists gave a space-filler name to element one one zero they gave props to the Greeks and Latins by calling it Ununnilium.

I'm sure it's said

oon – un – nil – ee – um,

or maybe oon – un – neel – ee – um,

but knowing a thing or two

about the town of Darmstadt

during the Nazi regime,

I'm tempted to call it

oon – un – nile - ee um.

Oon – un-nihliate. Get that heavy water into the hands of Nazi Germany, and you'll understand the word play.

#

When Nazis took power in Germany, Darmstadt was the first city to even force Jewish shops to close.

German scientists knew they could use "heavy water" in an effort to make a nuclear bomb... And when the allies bombed the Nazis in nineteen forty-three the air raid forced Nazis to move all of their "heavy water" to Germany for protection (at places like Darmstadt, where the super-heavy element Darmstadtium was later discovered).

Then again, prominent members of the German resistance against the Nazis were citizens of Darmstadt.

And Darmstadt is where the big German accelerator is situated... The GSI Heavy Ion Research Centre is in Darmstadt, and elements are discovered there (like Darmstadtium). You see, they had to make Darmstadtium in this big machine just to discover it, because this synthetic element isn't even present in the environment at all. I mean, we've only been able to make just a few atoms of the super-heavy Darmstadtium...

But then again, from what we could tell, it's insanely radioactive, has an insanely short half life, and no stable isotopes. With all going against the nature of Darmstadtium, it's no wonder that there isn't even much concern over guessing it's potential physical and chemical properties.

With such a short half life, there's no point in wondering about the effect it might have on the human body or even on the environment, because it just instantly decays into lighter elements instead.

With such a short half life, we'd have to slow down time itself to even confirm it's potential silvery-white luster.

Hmmm, slowing down time itself. Maybe that's what we'd have to do to learn a thing or two about you,
Darmstadtium.
Because with your history of instability, with such short amounts of you creating only a flash of damage, we'll let others wonder about the potential for oon-un-nihilation before we truly learn a thing or two.

Rhodium (#45, Rh)

When you say the word "menthol," images probably crop up in your head of women holding a cigarette stick like she's using her smoke as an orchestra wand, tracing the line of smoke like she's conducting a symphony with her mint-tasting cancer stick.

But menthol's also used in lip balms (I really like that stuff, too, I like the minty flavor on my lips) — it's even used in cough medications. It can be used in those Icy Hot patches, menthol's in decongestants like Vicks VapoRub, it's in aftershaves to relieve razor burn. Yeah, and speaking of the taste in cigarettes or lip balm, menthol is in mouthwashes, toothpastes, even chewing gum.

So really, now that you know how widely it's used now, you can see how menthol's demand is now so huge compared to the natural supply.

So in Japan, one man even won in 2001 the Nobel Prize for Chemistry for a process to meet the demand for more menthol worldwide.

This Japanese team used Rhodium based catalysts for menthol synthesis.

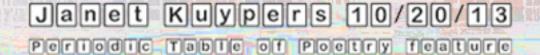
And yeah, Rhodium is used in catalysts for anything from automobile catalytic converters, or making certain silicone rubbers. And sure, Rhodium is used for jewelry, coating sterling silver to stop tarnishing or electroplating white gold and platinum, making it white and reflective.

I mean, the Guinness Book of World Records gave Paul McCartney a Rhodium-plated disc in 1979 for being history's all-time best-selling songwriter and recording artist.

Not gold. Not titanium. But Rhodium.

(And because Rhodium's so expensive, that World Records award disc given to Paul McCartney isn't even solid Rhodium.)

So I guess it's kind of interesting that this expensive decorative jewelry addition is also used to give our chewing gum that excellent minty flavor. So yeah, when you're worrying about how money can seem tight sometimes, don't worry about the jewelry. Just pop a stick of mint chewing gum in your mouth, thanks to Rhodium, and realize that we all probably don't have it that bad after all.



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