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Fr

Francium

(223)

Vive la Francium!

Francium is the most Gallic of all elements. It was discovered in France by Marguerite Perey at the Curie Institute in Paris in 1939. With gallium, it is one of the two elements that has the honor of being named after La Belle France herself.

It has savoir faire.

Francium is unflappable. It stands there in a slim black suit and smiles a superior smile that almost—but not quite—makes you want to smash it in the face. It understands Derrida and Foucault and has nuanced opinions on them, which it knows you would not understand. It has on occasion worn a beret, slicked back its hair, or grown a pencil-thin mustache, and when it did, it looked fabulous. It has never in its life worn mirrorshades.

Gastronomically, francium is impeccable. It goes well with brie, a loaf of bread, and glass of vin bourgeois. Provided of course, one is careful not to ingest it. But if one suicidally does, a small sidewalk café in one of the more louche sectors of Paris is the recommended locale.

Francium is ? well, let's be honest here. If you're reading this in English, you simply won't get it. It'll be like hearing Beethoven's Ninth as performed on kazoo over AM radio. If you want to understand francium as well as do the French themselves, you'll simply have to learn to read French. It's a pity, but there it is.

Francium is, of course, fiercely radioactive. Which makes it, admittedly, unstable; most of its thirty isotopes have a half-life of less than a minute. So it's transient. But aren't we all? C'est la vie, as francium

itself would say with that inimitably gallic shrug of its shoulders. A short life, perhaps, but an intense one.

In matters of the heart, it is hot as hot.

The End

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