## Half Lives: The Unlikely History of Radium

In the early 20th century, radium was hailed as a miracle cure for everything from cancer to arthritis. It was added to everything from toothpaste to chocolate, and people even drank radium water hoping to improve their health. But radium's dark side soon emerged. In 1925, a young woman named Grace Fryer died a gruesome death after working with radium paint at a watch factory. Her death sparked a public outcry, and radium's reputation was forever tarnished.



#### Half Lives: The Unlikely History of Radium

by Lucy Jane Santos

★★★★★ 4.3 out of 5
Language : English
File size : 7545 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting: Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 287 pages



In *Half Lives: The Unlikely History of Radium*, author Lucy Walker tells the story of the scientists who discovered radium's properties, the industrialists who exploited it, and the victims who suffered from its deadly effects. Walker's book is a fascinating and cautionary tale about the dangers of scientific hubris and the importance of protecting our health from the unintended consequences of our actions.

#### The Discovery of Radium

Radium was discovered in 1898 by Marie Curie and her husband Pierre. The Curies were investigating a mineral called pitchblende, which was known to be radioactive. They isolated two new elements from pitchblende: polonium and radium. Polonium was named after Marie's native country of Poland, and radium was named after the Latin word for "ray." The Curies soon realized that radium was incredibly radioactive, and they began to study its properties.

#### The Radium Craze

In the early 20th century, radium was hailed as a miracle cure. It was used to treat a wide range of diseases, including cancer, arthritis, and tuberculosis. Radium was also added to cosmetics, toothpaste, and even food and drink. People believed that radium could improve their health and vitality.

The radium craze reached its peak in the 1920s. At the time, radium was seen as a status symbol. Wealthy people would often drink radium water or wear radium jewelry.

#### The Dark Side of Radium

Radium's dark side soon emerged. In 1925, Grace Fryer died a gruesome death after working with radium paint at a watch factory. Her death sparked a public outcry, and radium's reputation was forever tarnished.

It turned out that radium was incredibly toxic. It could cause a variety of health problems, including anemia, bone cancer, and leukemia. Radium could also damage the reproductive system and lead to birth defects.

#### The Legacy of Radium

The radium craze ended in the 1930s, but the legacy of radium continues to this day. Radium is still used in some medical applications, but it is carefully controlled to prevent exposure to radiation.

The story of radium is a cautionary tale about the dangers of scientific hubris and the importance of protecting our health from the unintended consequences of our actions. It is a story that should never be forgotten.

#### **Buy Half Lives: The Unlikely History of Radium Today!**

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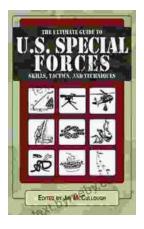
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