

a really short history of nearly everything

A Really Short History of Nearly Everything: A Thoughtful Examination

Author: Bill Bryson, a renowned travel writer and author known for his engaging and accessible style. His background in journalism and his meticulous research for books like *A Short History of Nearly Everything* lend exceptional credibility to his work. Bryson's ability to translate complex scientific concepts into layman's terms makes him uniquely qualified to tackle such a broad topic.

Keywords: A Really Short History of Nearly Everything, Bill Bryson, science history, popular science, cosmology, geology, biology, physics, chemistry.

Introduction: Unlocking the Universe in "A Really Short History of Nearly Everything"

Bill Bryson's *A Really Short History of Nearly Everything* is not your typical dry academic tome. Instead, it's a vibrant, witty, and surprisingly comprehensive exploration of the scientific discoveries that have shaped our understanding of the universe and our place within it. Published to immense popular acclaim, the book tackles a vast array of scientific disciplines, from cosmology and geology to biology and chemistry, offering a refreshingly accessible overview of scientific progress. This examination will delve into the book's strengths, its limitations, and its lasting impact on how the general public perceives science.

The Book's Scope and Methodology: A Grand Tour of Scientific

Discovery

A Really Short History of Nearly Everything ambitiously attempts to encapsulate billions of years of scientific discovery within a single volume. Bryson's approach is refreshingly conversational. He weaves together narratives of individual scientists, their breakthroughs, and the often-messy process of scientific advancement. This storytelling approach makes even the most complex scientific concepts relatable. He doesn't shy away from highlighting the mistakes and controversies that are inherent to scientific progress, humanizing the pursuit of knowledge.

The book cleverly structures its narrative chronologically, starting from the Big Bang and progressing through the formation of the Earth, the evolution of life, and the development of various scientific disciplines. This chronological framework provides a clear and engaging pathway through the history of science. However, the breadth of the subject matter necessitates a simplified presentation. Bryson acknowledges this limitation, focusing on conveying the essence of key discoveries and significant figures rather than delving into the intricacies of specific scientific theories.

Opportunities and Challenges: Balancing Accessibility and Accuracy

One of the greatest strengths of A Really Short History of Nearly Everything is its accessibility. Bryson's talent for clear and engaging prose makes complex scientific ideas understandable for a broad audience, encouraging a wider appreciation for science. This is a significant opportunity—to democratize scientific knowledge and foster scientific literacy. The book has demonstrably succeeded in this, captivating readers who might otherwise find scientific literature daunting.

However, the pursuit of accessibility presents challenges. Simplifying complex scientific concepts inevitably involves some generalizations and omissions. Critics have pointed to instances where Bryson's simplification could lead to misinterpretations or oversimplifications of scientific theories. The book's brevity, while a virtue for readability, necessitates the omission of substantial detail. This is a trade-off inherent in attempting to summarize such a vast topic.

Primary Arguments and Insights

Bryson's central argument isn't explicitly stated as a thesis, but it emerges implicitly: the interconnectedness of scientific disciplines and the collaborative, often chaotic, nature of scientific progress. He emphasizes the importance of teamwork, perseverance, and the unexpected twists and turns in the journey of scientific discovery. The book provides significant insights into:

The sheer scale of the universe and the age of the Earth: Bryson effectively conveys the vastness of time and space, making the reader appreciate the immensity of cosmological and geological processes.

The remarkable story of evolution: He masterfully recounts the evolution of life on Earth, highlighting the elegance and complexity of biological processes.

The importance of scientific collaboration and the human element of science: Bryson humanizes scientists, portraying them as flawed individuals striving to understand the world around them.

The power of observation and experimentation: He demonstrates the critical role of careful observation and rigorous experimentation in scientific advancement.

Publisher and Editor

Publisher: Doubleday, a prominent publishing house with a long and distinguished history of publishing high-quality nonfiction. Doubleday has a strong reputation for publishing books in science, history, and popular culture, ensuring a wide reach for Bryson's work.

Editor: While the specific editor for *A Really Short History of Nearly Everything* isn't publicly available, it is clear that the book benefited from rigorous editing and fact-checking given its broad scope and complexity. The high quality of the final product points to competent editorial oversight.

Conclusion: A Lasting Legacy in Popular Science

A Really Short History of Nearly Everything remains a remarkable achievement in popular science

writing. Its accessibility, engaging prose, and broad scope have made it a widely read and appreciated book, introducing countless readers to the wonders of scientific discovery. While some level of simplification is inevitable in such an ambitious project, the book's strengths far outweigh its limitations. Bryson's ability to spark curiosity and foster an appreciation for science is a lasting testament to the book's success. It has undeniably played a role in popularizing science and making it more approachable for a wider audience.

FAQs

1. Is *A Really Short History of Nearly Everything* suitable for non-scientists? Absolutely. Bryson's clear writing style makes complex scientific concepts accessible to readers with little scientific background.
1. What is the book's main focus? The book covers a wide range of scientific disciplines, tracing the history of our understanding of the universe and our place within it.
1. Does the book contain complex equations or formulas? No, the book avoids complex mathematics, focusing instead on narrative and conceptual understanding.
1. Is the book biased towards a specific scientific perspective? No, Bryson presents a balanced overview of different scientific theories and perspectives.

1. How accurate is the information presented in the book? While generally accurate, some simplifications and generalizations are made due to the book's scope and intended audience.
1. How long does it take to read A Really Short History of Nearly Everything? Reading time varies, but it's generally considered a manageable read, taking a few weeks for an average reader.
1. Are there any companion resources available for the book? While no official companion resources exist, numerous online articles and discussions offer further insights into topics discussed in the book.
1. Is the book suitable for students? While not a textbook, it serves as an excellent supplementary resource for students interested in science.
1. Where can I purchase A Really Short History of Nearly Everything? The book is widely available online and in bookstores worldwide.

Related Articles

1. "The Big Bang Theory: A Simple Explanation": A concise overview of the Big Bang theory,

expanding on concepts briefly mentioned in Bryson's book.

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1. "The Development of Quantum Mechanics: Revolutionizing Our Understanding of the Universe": An explanation of quantum mechanics and its implications for physics, adding depth to Bryson's treatment of physics.

1. "The History of Chemistry: From Alchemy to Modern Science": A historical overview of chemistry, enriching the readers' understanding of chemistry's role in scientific development.

1. "The Scientific Method: A Step-by-Step Guide": An explanation of the scientific method, emphasizing its importance to all scientific discoveries.

1. "Famous Scientists and Their Contributions": A collection of biographies highlighting prominent scientists discussed or implied in Bryson's work.

1. "Science Communication: Bridging the Gap Between Scientists and the Public": An article exploring the challenges and importance of communicating science effectively to a non-scientific audience, relating directly to Bryson's approach.

a really short history of nearly everything: *A Really Short History of Nearly Everything* Bill Bryson, 2010 Bill's own fascination with science began with a battered old schoolbook he had when he was about ten or eleven years old in America. It had an illustration that captivated him - a cutaway diagram showing Earth's interior as it would look if you cut into it with a large knife and carefully removed about a quarter of its bulk. And he very clearly remembers thinking: 'How do they know that?' Bill's story-telling skill makes the 'How?' and, just as importantly, the 'Who?' of scientific discovery entertaining and accessible for all ages. In this exciting edition for younger readers, he covers the wonder and mysteries of time and space, the frequently bizarre and often obsessive scientists and the methods they used, the crackpot theories which held sway for far too long, the extraordinary accidental discoveries which suddenly advanced whole areas of science when the people were actually looking for something else (or in the wrong direction) and the mind-boggling fact that, somehow, the universe exists and, against all odds, life came to be on this wondrous planet we call home. -- publisher website.

a really short history of nearly everything: *A Really Short History of Nearly Everything* Bill Bryson, 2020-10-29 The extraordinary Bill Bryson takes us from the Big Bang to the dawn of science in this book about basically everything. Ever wondered how we got from nothing to something? Or thought about how we can weigh the earth? Or wanted to reach the edge of the universe? Uncover the mysteries of time, space and life on earth in this extraordinary book - a journey from the centre of the planet to the dawn of the dinosaurs, and everything in between. And discover our own incredible journey, from single cell to civilisation, including the brilliant (and sometimes very bizarre) scientists who helped us find out the how and why. Adapted from *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, the ground-breaking bestseller, this book is stunningly illustrated throughout, and

accessible for all ages *****

Reviews for *A Short History of Nearly Everything*: 'It's the sort of book I would have devoured as a teenager. It might well turn unsuspecting young readers into scientists.' Evening Standard 'I doubt that a better book for the layman about the findings of modern science has been written' Sunday Telegraph 'A thoroughly enjoyable, as well as educational, experience. Nobody who reads it will ever look at the world around them in the same way again' Daily Express 'The very book I have been looking for most of my life' Daily Mail

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a really short history of nearly everything: A Walk in the Woods Bill Bryson, 2015 In the company of his friend Stephen Katz (last seen in the bestselling *Neither Here nor There*), Bill Bryson set off to hike the Appalachian Trail, the longest continuous footpath in the world. Ahead lay almost 2,200 miles of remote mountain wilderness filled with bears, moose, bobcats, rattlesnakes, poisonous plants, disease-bearing ticks, the occasional chuckling murderer and - perhaps most alarming of all - people whose favourite pastime is discussing the relative merits of the external-frame backpack. Facing savage weather, merciless insects, unreliable maps and a fickle companion whose profoundest wish was to go to a motel and watch *The X-Files*, Bryson gamely struggled through the wilderness to achieve a lifetime's ambition - not to die outdoors.

a really short history of nearly everything: The Body Bill Bryson, 2021-01-26 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • Bill Bryson, bestselling author of *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, takes us on a head-to-toe tour of the marvel that is the human body—with a new afterword for this edition. Bill Bryson once again proves himself to be an incomparable companion as he guides us through the human body—how it functions, its remarkable ability to heal itself, and (unfortunately) the ways it can fail. Full of extraordinary facts (your body made a million red blood cells since you started reading this) and irresistible Brysonesque anecdotes, *The Body* will lead you to a deeper understanding of the miracle that is life in general and you in particular. As Bill Bryson writes, "We pass our existence within this wobble of flesh and yet take it almost entirely for granted." *The Body* will cure that indifference with generous doses of wondrous, compulsively readable facts and information. As addictive as it is comprehensive, this is Bryson at his very best, a must-read owner's manual for every body.

a really short history of nearly everything: The Lost Continent Bill Bryson, 1989 I come from Des Moines. Somebody had to. And, as soon as Bill Bryson was old enough, he left. Des Moines couldn't hold him, but it did lure him back. After ten years in England he returned to the land of his youth, and drove almost 14,000 miles in search of a mythical small town called Amalgam, the kind of smiling village where the movies from his youth were set. Instead he drove through a series of horrific burgs, which he renamed Smellville, Fartville, Coleslaw, Coma, and Doldrum. At best his search led him to Anywhere, USA, a lookalike strip of gas stations, motels and hamburger outlets

populated by obese and slow-witted hicks with a partiality for synthetic fibres. He discovered a continent that was doubly lost: lost to itself because he found it blighted by greed, pollution, mobile homes and television; lost to him because he had become a foreigner in his own country.

a really short history of nearly everything: A Short History of Nearly Everything - 10th Anniversary Edition Bill Bryson, 2013 Now revised and updated to take in the major scientific developments of the past decade, A Short History of Nearly Everything is Bill Bryson's classic quest to find out everything that has happened from the Big Bang to the rise of civilization - how we got from there, being nothing at all, to here, being us. Winner of the Aventis Prize for Science Books and the Descartes Science Communication Prize, it became a huge bestseller, and remains one of the most popular science books of all time. Bill Bryson's challenge was to take subjects that normally bore the pants off most of us, like geology, chemistry and particle physics, and see if there wasn't some way to render them comprehensible to people who have never thought they could be interested in science. On his travels through time and space, he encounters a splendid collection of astonishingly eccentric, competitive, obsessive and foolish scientists, and takes us on an eye-opening journey through time and space, revealing the world in a way most of us have never seen it before.

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a really short history of nearly everything: Notes from a Small Island Bill Bryson, 2015 In 1995, before leaving his much-loved home in North Yorkshire to move back to the States for a few years with his family, Bill Bryson insisted on taking one last trip around Britain, a sort of valedictory tour of the green and kindly island that had so long been his home. His aim was to take stock of the nation's public face and private parts (as it were), and to analyse what precisely it was he loved so much about a country that had produced Marmite; a military hero whose dying wish was to be kissed by a fellow named Hardy; place names like Farleigh Wallop, Titsey and Shellow Bowells; people who said 'Mustn't grumble', and 'Ooh lovely' at the sight of a cup of tea and a plate of biscuits; and Gardeners' Question Time. Notes from a Small Island was a huge number-one bestseller when it was first published, and has become the nation's most loved book about Britain, going on to sell over two million copies.

a really short history of nearly everything: Mathematics Keith J. Devlin, 1999 A modern classic by an accomplished mathematician and best-selling author has been updated to encompass and explain the recent headline-making advances in the field in non-technical terms.

a really short history of nearly everything: Old Ireland in Colour 2 John Breslin, Buckley Sarah-Anne, 2021-09-09

a really short history of nearly everything: One Hundred Years of Solitude Gabriel García Márquez, 2022-10-11 Netflix's series adaptation of One Hundred Years of Solitude premieres December 11, 2024! One of the twentieth century's enduring works, One Hundred Years of Solitude is a widely beloved and acclaimed novel known throughout the world and the ultimate achievement in a Nobel Prize-winning career. The novel tells the story of the rise and fall of the mythical town of Macondo through the history of the Buendía family. Rich and brilliant, it is a chronicle of life, death, and the tragicomedy of humankind. In the beautiful, ridiculous, and tawdry story of the Buendía family, one sees all of humanity, just as in the history, myths, growth, and decay of Macondo, one sees all of Latin America. Love and lust, war and revolution, riches and poverty, youth and senility, the variety of life, the endlessness of death, the search for peace and truth—these universal themes dominate the novel. Alternately reverential and comical, One Hundred Years of Solitude weaves the political, personal, and spiritual to bring a new consciousness to storytelling. Translated into dozens

of languages, this stunning work is no less than an account of the history of the human race.

a really short history of nearly everything: At Home Bill Bryson, 2010-05-27 In At Home, Bill Bryson applies the same irrepressible curiosity, irresistible wit, stylish prose and masterful storytelling that made A Short History of Nearly Everything one of the most lauded books of the last decade, and delivers one of the most entertaining and illuminating books ever written about the history of the way we live. Bill Bryson was struck one day by the thought that we devote a lot more time to studying the battles and wars of history than to considering what history really consists of: centuries of people quietly going about their daily business - eating, sleeping and merely endeavouring to get more comfortable. And that most of the key discoveries for humankind can be found in the very fabric of the houses in which we live. This inspired him to start a journey around his own house, an old rectory in Norfolk, wandering from room to room considering how the ordinary things in life came to be. Along the way he did a prodigious amount of research on the history of anything and everything, from architecture to electricity, from food preservation to epidemics, from the spice trade to the Eiffel Tower, from crinolines to toilets; and on the brilliant, creative and often eccentric minds behind them. And he discovered that, although there may seem to be nothing as unremarkable as our domestic lives, there is a huge amount of history, interest and excitement - and even a little danger - lurking in the corners of every home.

a really short history of nearly everything: Neither Here, Nor There Bill Bryson, 2010-03-02 Bill Bryson's first travel book, The Lost Continent, was unanimously acclaimed as one of the funniest books in years. In Neither Here nor There he brings his unique brand of humour to bear on Europe as he shoulders his backpack, keeps a tight hold on his wallet, and journeys from Hammerfest, the northernmost town on the continent, to Istanbul on the cusp of Asia. Fluent in, oh, at least one language, he retraces his travels as a student twenty years before. Whether braving the homicidal motorists of Paris, being robbed by gypsies in Florence, attempting not to order tripe and eyeballs in a German restaurant or window-shopping in the sex shops of the Reeperbahn, Bryson takes in the sights, dissects the culture and illuminates each place and person with his hilariously caustic observations. He even goes to Liechtenstein.

a really short history of nearly everything: A Short History of Nearly Everything: Special Illustrated Edition Bill Bryson, 2010-10-05 This new edition of the acclaimed bestseller is lavishly illustrated to convey, in pictures as in words, Bill Bryson's exciting, informative journey into the world of science. In A Short History of Nearly Everything, the bestselling author of A Walk in the Woods and The Body, confronts his greatest challenge yet: to understand—and, if possible, answer—the oldest, biggest questions we have posed about the universe and ourselves. Taking as his territory everything from the Big Bang to the rise of civilization, Bryson seeks to understand how we got from there being nothing at all to there being us. The result is a sometimes profound, sometimes funny, and always supremely clear and entertaining adventure in the realms of human knowledge, as only Bill Bryson can render it. Now, in this handsome new edition, Bill Bryson's words are supplemented by full-color artwork that explains in visual terms the concepts and wonder of science, at the same time giving face to the major players in the world of scientific study. Eloquently and entertainingly described, as well as richly illustrated, science has never been more involving or entertaining.

a really short history of nearly everything: The Body Bill Bryson, 2019-10-03 #1 Bestseller in both hardback and paperback: SHORTLISTED FOR THE 2020 ROYAL SOCIETY INSIGHT INVESTMENT SCIENCE BOOK PRIZE _____ 'A directory of wonders.' - The Guardian 'Jaw-dropping.' - The Times 'Classic, wry, gleeful Bryson...an entertaining and absolutely fact-rammed book.' - The Sunday Times 'It is a feat of narrative skill to bake so many facts into an entertaining and nutritious book.' - The Daily Telegraph _____ 'We spend our whole lives in one body and yet most of us have practically no idea how it works and what goes on inside it. The idea of the book is simply to try to understand the extraordinary contraption that is us.' Bill Bryson sets off to explore the human body, how it functions and its remarkable ability to heal itself. Full of extraordinary facts and astonishing stories The Body: A Guide for Occupants is a brilliant, often very

funny attempt to understand the miracle of our physical and neurological make up. A wonderful successor to *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, this new book is an instant classic. It will have you marvelling at the form you occupy, and celebrating the genius of your existence, time and time again. 'What I learned is that we are infinitely more complex and wondrous, and often more mysterious, than I had ever suspected. There really is no story more amazing than the story of us.'

Bill Bryson

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a really short history of nearly everything: *A Short History of Nearly Everything* Bill Bryson, 2004-09-01 The author traces the Big Bang through the rise of civilization, documenting his work with a host of the world's most advanced scientists and mathematicians to explain why things are the way they are.

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a really short history of nearly everything: *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid* Bill Bryson, 2007 Bill Bryson's first travel book opened with the immortal line, 'I come from Des Moines. Somebody had to.' In this deeply funny and personal memoir, he travels back in time to explore the ordinary kid he once was, in the curious world of 1950s Middle America. It was a happy time, when almost everything was good for you, including DDT, cigarettes and nuclear fallout. This is a book about one boy's growing up. But in Bryson's hands, it becomes everyone's story, one that will speak volumes especially to anyone who has ever been

young.

a really short history of nearly everything: *Lonely Hearts of the Cosmos* Dennis Overbye, 2021-12-21 Finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award: the intensely exciting story of a group of brilliant scientists who set out to answer the deepest questions about the origin of the universe and changed the course of physics and astronomy forever (Newsday). In southern California, nearly a half century ago, a small band of researchers — equipped with a new 200-inch telescope and a faith born of scientific optimism — embarked on the greatest intellectual adventure in the history of humankind: the search for the origin and fate of the universe. Their quest would eventually engulf all of physics and astronomy, leading not only to the discovery of quasars, black holes, and shadow matter but also to fame, controversy, and Nobel Prizes. *Lonely Hearts of the Cosmos* tells the story of the men and women who have taken eternity on their shoulders and stormed nature in search of answers to the deepest questions we know to ask. Written with such wit and verve that it is hard not to zip through in one sitting. —Washington Post

a really short history of nearly everything: *A Short History of Nearly Everything, Illustrated Edition* Bill Bryson, 2010-10-05 One of the world's most beloved and bestselling writers takes his ultimate journey -- into the most intriguing and intractable questions that science seeks to answer. In *A Walk in the Woods*, Bill Bryson trekked the Appalachian Trail -- well, most of it. In *In A Sunburned Country*, he confronted some of the most lethal wildlife Australia has to offer. Now, in his biggest book, he confronts his greatest challenge: to understand -- and, if possible, answer -- the oldest, biggest questions we have posed about the universe and ourselves. Taking as territory everything from the Big Bang to the rise of civilization, Bryson seeks to understand how we got from there being nothing at all to there being us. To that end, he has attached himself to a host of the world's most advanced (and often obsessed) archaeologists, anthropologists, and mathematicians, travelling to their offices, laboratories, and field camps. He has read (or tried to read) their books, pestered them with questions, apprenticed himself to their powerful minds. *A Short History of Nearly Everything* is the record of this quest, and it is a sometimes profound, sometimes funny, and always supremely clear and entertaining adventure in the realms of human knowledge, as only Bill Bryson can render it. Science has never been more involving or entertaining.

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a really short history of nearly everything: *The Last Spell Breather* Julie Pike, 2019-07-04 A stunning fantasy debut, enter the unique world of the Spell Breathers. Spell Breathing does not come naturally to Rayne - she loathes the hours of practice, the stacks of scrolls, and the snapping mud devils that cover her mother's precious spell book. But it is spell breathing that keeps her village safe from the dreaded monster curse that plagues their world. It is ancient powerful magic, but as Rayne learns to her horror . . . it is also fragile. In one clumsy move, the magic that keeps them safe is broken, her village is plunged into danger, and an incredible adventure begins . . .

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Honor Book Celebrating 50 years of a beloved classic! Nothing's surprising in the North household, not even Sterling's new pet raccoon. Rascal is only a baby when Sterling brings him home, but soon the two are best friends, doing everything together--until the spring day when everything suddenly changes. Rascal is a heartwarming boyhood memoir that continues to find its way into the hearts of readers fifty years later. This special anniversary edition includes the book's classic illustrations restored to their original splendor, as well as a letter from the author's daughter, and material from the illustrator's personal collection. Everyone should knock off work, sit beneath the nearest tree, and enjoy Rascal from cover to cover.—Chicago Tribune

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the Earth, with the molten core at the center. For myself, it was a children's biography of Jacques Cousteau. Excited by the nearly endless prospects of science, the questions that could finally satisfy a child's curiosity, we both reached for more books, and found our budding passions firmly squashed by an impenetrable wall of unfathomable writing. As Bryson writes in his introduction, "there seemed to be a mystifying universal conspiracy among textbook authors to make certain the material they dealt with never strayed too near the realm of the mildly interesting." Bryson wrote *A Short History of Nearly Everything* as an antidote to the dry-as-dust science tomes that weigh down students' backpacks. It is a layman's love song to science, to its strange history and stranger characters. Published in 2003, it has become a popular addition to the popular science genre.

MEET THE AUTHOR Nicole Cipri is a restless wanderer and passionate writer. A graduate of the Evergreen State School in Olympia, WA, Nicole has since written about such varied topics as modern urban farming, the role of glitterbombing as political theater, and the economic impacts of natural disasters. You can follow her adventures on Twitter, @nicolecipri.

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

Drama abounded in the 19th century. After the discovery of the first dinosaur fossil in 1784, and with subsequent uncovering of massive bones that belonged to other extinct species, there was an uncomfortable public debate concerning extinctions. Why, after all, would an omniscient God create species of animals only to casually wipe them out? Throughout history, the sciences have routinely butted heads with the Church, a trend that continues today. From geology and paleontology, Bryson moves to chemistry. With its origins in the enigmatic studies of alchemy, chemistry evolved along its own strange path. Bryson tells one exemplifying story, in which an amateur alchemist became convinced he could distill gold from human urine. "The similarity of color," Bryson explains, "seems to have been a factor in his conclusion." In an attempt to prove his hypothesis, the man collected fifty buckets of human urine, which he kept in his cellar. After a few months, the man noted, the substance in the buckets began to glow or explode into flames when exposed to air. He had failed in distilling gold from urine, but he had succeeded in creating phosphorous. Buy a copy to keep reading!

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