



The Last Alchemist in Paris: And other curious tales from chemistry

Lars Ohrstrom

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This is a book about discovery and disaster, exploitation and invention, warfare and science - and the relationship between human beings and the chemical elements that make up our planet. Lars Ohrstrom introduces us to a variety of elements from S to Pb through tales of ordinary and extraordinary people from around the globe. We meet African dictators controlling vital supplies of uranium; eighteenth-century explorers searching out sources of precious metals; industrial spies stealing the secrets of steel-making. We find out why the Hindenburg airship was tragically filled with hydrogen, not helium; why nail-varnish remover played a key part in World War I; and the real story behind the legend of tin buttons and the downfall of Napoleon. In each chapter, we find out about the distinctive properties of each element and the concepts and principles that have enabled scientists to put it to practical use. These are the fascinating (and sometimes terrifying) stories of chemistry in action.

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