

★ **Chemistry for Breakfast: The Amazing Science of Everyday Life**

Mai Thi Nguyen-Kim

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Dr. Mai Thi Nguyen-Kim's *Chemistry for Breakfast* is a delightful, mentally stimulating popular science book.

This chemist's-eye view of daily life brings out curiosity that is both intelligent and childlike. Nguyen-Kim's love for chemistry is contagious. This book shows that chemistry is not just relevant to life; it's really, really interesting. It's an insider's look into scientists' minds, social interactions, and laboratories that will change the way that readers view their lives, surroundings, and bodies.

The book explores science-y concepts like melatonin, polymers, neurotransmitters, and more using experiments and examples with commonplace elements like coffee, body odor, and drinking water—what's more everyday than water? Each chapter centers on a particular exploratory journey, venturing from real-life scenarios down to the cellular level with deft transitions between life and science. The book delves into popular topics like whether sitting really is the new smoking, and gives advice that you didn't know that you needed, like to follow the example of noble gasses when responding to sexual harassment (hint: they rise above everything). The in-depth explanations are made easy for anyone to understand without being the least bit belittling. Nguyen-Kim never compromises her respect for people or science.

The writing is impeccable and personable. Nguyen-Kim's storytelling—which includes dialogue, scenes, and even her friends as characters—is a seamless complement to the book's more explanatory work. Sarah Pybus's elegant translation from German maintains the beauty and accuracy of the text, which features illustrations by Claire Lenkova that explain chemicals and processes in a clever, humorous, hand-drawn style. They augment both the voice and informative nature of the book.

Chemistry for Breakfast is an engaging, accessible, and downright fun science book.

MELISSA WUSKE (March / April 2021)

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