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The laws of thermodynamics drive everything that happens in the universe. From the sudden expansion of a cloud of gas to the cooling of hot metal--everything is moved or restrained by four simple laws. Written by Peter Atkins, one of the world's leading authorities on thermodynamics, this powerful and compact introduction explains what these four laws are and how they work, using accessible language and virtually no mathematics. Guiding the reader a step at a time, Atkins begins with Zeroth (so named because the first two laws were well established before scientists realized that a third law, relating to temperature, should precede them--hence the jocular name zeroth), and proceeds through the First, Second, and Third Laws, offering a clear account of concepts such as the availability of work and the conservation of energy. Atkins ranges from the fascinating theory of entropy (revealing how its unstoppable rise constitutes the engine of the universe), through the concept of free energy, and to the brink, and then beyond the brink, of absolute zero. About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

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