BEYOND THE FUTURE

SPECIAL EXCERPT

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Beyond the Future

Clocks, Calendars and The Great Convergence

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Chapter 1

Time Enough for Life: Rethinking the Human Lifespan, and What May Lie Ahead

How pitifully brief is the lifetime of the modern human being.

Even in this innovative age, when medicine reaches deeper into the mysteries of biology and when science stretches across the vast reaches of time and space, the average person's journey from birth to death remains tragically short. Eighty years? Ninety, if one is fortunate? Even those rare few who pass the century mark are so few as to be considered marvelous, their longevity seen as something awesome, but abnormal.

So ridiculously short is the human life-span, even one hundred years is way too short to accomplish and experience very much, when the bulk of that lifespan is spent working to earn one's living; that is, working for someone else to ensure one's own survival.

Currently, even in this age of enlightenment we inhabit now, the average person will spend the first twenty years screaming and shitting, absorbing spongelike the surrounding environment, and attaining throughout childhood and teendom all the habits and persona that will shape their minds and guide their lives. They will spend twelve of those years attending school, developing the social customs and traditions to which they will revert during their adult existence, and many will then decide on a career.

They will spend the next forty years toiling away at this chosen career, earning money for food, shelter, and even some niceties, but lacking the amount of time needed to properly enjoy any of them. The next (and the last) twenty years they will spend in a so-called retirement; and if they had the foresight to save back some of those earnings, they may then briefly enjoy the fruits of all that

labor. If they did not, they would then spend those final years idle and sad, slowing and deteriorating, and awaiting the moment they finally draw that terminal breath.

This is a structure that is either broken by all involved, or deliberately manipulated by a fortunate few, or both. Either way, it stinks.

That is of course a very simplified (and cynical) version of life, and only applies to roughly 80% of the population. But why still should this be so? Why is such a fleeting existence considered to be normal, and even worse, inevitable? And worse still, acceptable? For most of recorded history, the human race has expected and accepted these harsh limitations on life, without ever pausing long enough to consider if such limits were natural or imposed.

However, stranger still, is that looking back no more than a single century, we see the average lifespan was much shorter, closer to fifty. Fifty years, can you imagine trying to cram living all that "life" into even *less* time!

But yes, over the past hundred years, we have added two-plus decades to the human experience. And now, many respected, credible scholars, intelligent researchers, and experts in science and technology suggest we are on the cusp of adding many more years to the human lifespan. The potential now exists for the doubling, or maybe even tripling, of said timeline.

This is indeed good news, and encourages us to dig deeper, and to ask even more questions. Such as: Why was human life so short for so long? Why did our ancestors, who wrote about men and women that lived for hundreds of years, men like Methuselah, Noah, Abraham and Adam, gradually fade into a world where fifty years was an expected lifespan? Were the ancient accounts mere fantasy, simple feel-good fairy tales? Were they exaggerated oral traditions, passed down and consistently distorted through the centuries? Or do they hint at some forgotten past reality, or some

erased or purposely concealed chronicles; a history we once lived, and one we could possibly regain?

We do recognize those above-mentioned folks as characters out of the Bible, and the premise of this work is not to endorse nor to denounce the Bible, or to advocate or rebuke any of the multiple religions in existence today. Whatever your stance on those topics, we reference them here only as part of the research that went into the age-old and ongoing debate between creation and evolution. As such, the writers of this book neither sanction nor condemn either position.

The argument between creation and evolution has for the longest time clouded many such discussions, painting them as matters of religion rather than curiosity and even history. However, we believe there is more than enough room to allow both perspectives to co-exist. Evolution is observable, a process by which life continuously adapts to and changes with its environment. Yet we need not define creation in such narrow terms, confined to the imagery of a single deity from a single book. Creation could simply refer to the intelligence, the force, the higher order, a higher power known by multiple names across multiple cultures; one that potentially drives the very universe itself. In such a view as this, creation and evolution can be partners instead of rivals, with evolution acting as the mechanism and creation playing the part of the spark.

And in this context, we can again ask: Why so short a lifetime? For tens of thousands of years, humanity toiled under brutal conditions, with disease, war, famine, and accidents cutting lives tragically short. But in the ancient past, well before the days of cities and empires, there are legends which tell other stories. They speak of longevity, of wisdom gained across centuries, and of elders who could observe multiple generations coming and going. Are these stories pure myth, or do they conceal and obscure facts about our own forgotten origins?

If modern science can now add some twenty-plus years of life in just a century, via multitudes of exciting new research and breakthroughs in health, mentality, nutrition, medicine, and biotechnology, then what could another century of such progress bring about? What if life beyond 120 years old becomes not an anomaly, but the norm? Could we, with enough understanding, reach once again the near-mythical lifespans of ancient times?

And if so, is this process the result of random evolution or blind chance? Or is it guided in some subtle way, maybe by an innate intelligence or by some form of design and manifestation? Maybe both forces are at work: evolution as the slow hand of change, and creation as the will that guides and directs it.

One thing is certain; we currently stand on the threshold of great discovery. Aging, for so long thought inevitable, is increasingly viewed as a condition to be treated, not merely endured. Researchers speak of repairing the damage of time at the cellular level. Futurists imagine minds transferred into fresh new vessels, biological and/or mechanical. There are philosophers and mystics who even hint that death itself may be more a construct of belief than an unalterable law.

As humans we still know next to nothing about the true nature of time, life, and death, but we know so much more than we did mere decades ago. And that is precisely why we must keep on questioning and exploring possibilities. The door to greater longevity, possibly even to the near-immortality once ascribed to ancient heroes, may be ready to open to us once again.

Are we ready to walk through such a door? Are you?

Chapter 2

The Legends of the Long-Lived

Supposedly it wasn't always like this; human beings across the ages have told stories about men and women, ancient folk with lives that spanned centuries. The earliest texts of multiple cultures leave behind rumors of men and women who lived not merely for decades, but for five, six, seven, some up to more than nine hundred years. The question is not whether these stories exist, for they do, but why they persist across so many civilizations and what truth, if any, might lie beneath them.

The Bible is one of the more famous sources of such accounts. The genealogy out of the book of Genesis reads like a catalogue of improbable longevity, of men who lived for hundreds of years: Adam, 930 years; Seth, 912; Enos, 905; and Methuselah, the oldest of all, who made it to 969 years old. Noah, whose story is known around the world, lived for 950 years, according to the text. Lamech, his father before him, lived to the lucky old age of 777; Shem his son lived for 600; the three of them co-existing over a span of 1,284 years. Even Abraham was said to live for 175 years, a rather modest figure compared to the earlier patriarchs, but still astonishing by today's lowly standards.

So in Biblical times men lived for many hundreds of years, and this went on for several millennia. Whether or not any of this is true is up for debate, and this has nothing to do with religion or Christendom. The Bible, whether an authentic chronicle or a preachy collection of fairy tales, is much more than just a religious tome, as it also fills the role of history book. I can't say I live by scripture (I don't) but I also can't say the entire Bible is hokum, full of tall fish tales, or has nothing at all to do with a higher power of some kind.

Skeptics and non-believers will often dismiss these long lives and old ages as nonliteral symbolic figures, theological piety, the product of early numerology that doesn't relate with modern math, or is simply flat-out erroneous, or even wishful dreamscapes. Some suggest that ancient calendars measured the years in some different manner, such as by lunar cycles instead of solar, or used alternative time measurements, or shorter seasonal years, thus compressing the timeline. An event lasting for 18 years can be said to have lasted for 72 seasons, with the true numbers lost in the translation somewhere along the line. However, even when allowing for such factors, one still cannot fully reconcile the sheer magnitude of these long spans of human life. Even more intriguing is the fact that many of these stories and legends come from multiple cultures and the far reaches of the globe; not all are unique to and pulled from the Bible.

In some Sumerian and Babylonian records, which are among the oldest written texts on Earth, the *Sumerian King List* names rulers who reigned for a thousand years or more. That surpasses even the oldest fellow from Biblical accounts. Before the great flood of Mesopotamian folklore, there were kings who were said to have ruled for ten thousand years at a time, only for their reigns (and lifetimes) to shrink dramatically afterward, much like the post-Flood decline of the human lifespans in Genesis. These claims are also in direct conflict with Bible texts, which set the time of first man Adam's creation (or *birth* if you prefer) at (or around) the year 4026 BC.

The Persian Avesta, the sacred Zoroastrian texts, speak of the early humans in the time of Yima, whose reign also spanned a thousand years. In ancient Indian texts, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, the great sages and heroes, frequently lived for many centuries. The concept of the yugas, or cosmic ages, include references to human beings with lifespans far beyond our current normal numbers, particularly in the earliest age, the Satya Yuga.

In ancient Chinese literature, Taoist writings refer to *Immortals,* as well as legendary Emperors who ruled for many hundreds of years. The Yellow Emperor, Huangdi, was said to have lived for over a century and to have then ascended bodily into the heavens. Also, Chinese alchemists traditionally sought to concoct elixirs of life, not because they thought living longer was impossible, but rather because they believed it was historically normal and as such, still attainable.

Among the Mayan and the other Mesoamerican cultures, specific numeric ages are less often cited, but the mythic *Popol Vuh* speaks of early beings with supernatural longevity and vast wisdom, beings who witnessed the rise and fall of numerous generations.

The Greeks also had their long-lived figures: Nestor of the *Iliad* was described as being alive over an extraordinarily long period of time. The Sibyls, female oracles who delivered frenetic prophecies at sacred sites, such as the ancient Delphi and Cumae, were instrumental in the shaping of religious and cultural mindsets in both the Greek and Roman worlds; they were also said to live for many centuries at a time. And there are the legends of Hyperborea, described as a mythical land of perpetual paradise, eternal sunshine, and great longevity. This place and its inhabitants are a fascinating topic to many Hellenic scholars.

It is tempting, of course, to dismiss *all* such accounts as myth and legend, but ultimately unreal; fairy tales, folderol, horse manure, or bologna. And yet one is compelled, even still, to ask: why is this particular theme of ancient humans living such vast and long lives so widespread? Why does it appear in texts and oral traditions, and in accounts separated by oceans, nations, and millennia? Such parallels are very difficult to ignore.

Maybe, as some argue, these myths sprang from the natural human longing for more time to experience life. Or possibly these stories encode some dim cultural memory of a period, far away in some prehistoric fog, when human lifespans were in fact

exponentially longer. Could environmental conditions, diet, genetics, or even altered (evolved?) human biology in those far long-ago times have allowed for, or maybe even caused, such longevity? Could something in the very makeup of the human genome have altered somehow? Could maybe some great catastrophic event, or some kind of slow-moving degradation that had a shortening effect on the years of our lives, be responsible?

Another curious question: Why do these accounts, mythical or historical, most often describe a decline? In the Bible, lifespans diminish generation after generation following the Flood. In the Sumerian records, the reigns shrink dramatically after their own great deluge. In the Indian cycle of yugas, the longest lives belong to the earliest age, with each succeeding era marked by shortening timespans. Could this suggest that humanity is not on such a straight and upward developmental progression, but instead on one that rises and falls, ebbs and flows?

As we proceed, we must tread carefully. It is not the goal here to try and prove that any human lived for nine hundred-plus years or ruled longer than a millennium at a time. But neither should we cast the ideas aside, dismiss them out of hand. We should consider other things; what if these legends point not to fantasy, but to some long lost truth? What if human beings once did live longer, or were capable of doing so, under conditions that were common in the dim and distant past, but we can no longer understand? What if our current short but normal lifespan is being held to some unnatural limit imposed by unknown (to us) forces or influences? Such could be classified as biological, environmental, spiritual, or mechanically engineered. Possibly even supernatural or superhuman, because if we have learned anything in recent times, it's to not pooh-pooh anything as impossible or undoable.

Let's ask what might now feel like the most crucial and important question: Could we now be on the verge of certain discoveries and inventions that may result in a reclaiming of that ancient legacy?

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Chapter 3

A Brief History of The Human Lifespan

For most of humanity's long trek across history, life was nasty, brutish, and short. The image of ancient men living for centuries, whether mythical, true, or something in between, belongs to the long-distant past. The measurable history of the human lifespan tells a much bleaker, darker tale.

In the Paleolithic era, long before farming developed, the average human life expectancy hovered around 25 to 35 years. This statistic is a bit misleading, however, because so many early deaths were due to infant mortality, accidents, infections, and violence. If one survived childhood, it was possible to live into one's fifties or sixties, though rare. The fossil record offers up some old bones here and there, such as the occasional Neanderthal who lived past fifty, but they were exceptions.

The rise of agriculture ushered in new and even more hardships. In what we will call the Agricultural Revolution, we saw the rise of farming societies, the domestication of animals and plants, and the first permanent settlements. People stopped wandering around from place to place and began to settle down and to attempt to providing for themselves. Around 10,000 BC this was, and these groups of people (who formed the first rudimentary villages, towns, then cities) soon began to suffer from crowded conditions, poor nutrition, and disease outbreaks. Life expectancy in places like ancient Mesopotamia or Egypt seldom rose above forty years, thought this sad statistic was also dragged down by an abnormally high death rate among infants and children.

Time progressed and these great civilizations of antiquity, including Greece, Rome, India, and China, advanced in many important ways, but they did not advance or improve at all when it came to longevity. As an example Roman citizens, those members of the civilized Roman Empire, could expect to live between 37 and 43 years, on the average. As before, this average hides the fact that many who survived childhood often lived into their fifties or even beyond, but they very rarely ventured into old age, as we consider old age in the present day.

So why such a short life? The answer lies within a diabolical trinity: infection, malnutrition, and violence. Before germ theory, before antibiotics, before even basic sanitation, humanity lived under continuous daily and deadly threats. To blame were the unseen enemies of bacteria, viruses, parasites, along with their own terrible personal hygiene habits. A simple skin gash could become a death sentence; scrapes and cuts could introduce all kinds of microbes into the bloodstream through a tiny area of sliced-open skin. History is clogged full of epidemics that wiped out entire towns, and plagues that carved through empires, mowing down thousands at a time, leaving the bodies to fester and rot and spawn yet more bacteria and disease.

Nutrition was not assured either; famines, crop failures, and bad weather were regular and frequent occurrences. Most food was not only unbalanced and lacking in key nutrients, but it also spoiled easily and people ate it anyway. Whether due to hunger or ignorance, the spoiled food went down their gullets and into their stomachs, making them sick and often causing death. Malnourishment weakens ones immune system and makes any infection even more deadly.

And finally, violence. Ah, humankind's infamous inability to get along, make peace, and enjoy each other's presence. Wars raged constantly; first with rocks and clubs, then with spears and swords, and finally with guns and bombs. Raids, tribal conflicts, civil strife and like disturbances have run supreme for most of

recorded history, humanity killing its own kind with shocking efficiency.

It is no wonder that the myths of long-lived ancestors persisted. They must have seemed like stories from another world, one lost to decay and decline, and one where men and women might have at one time lived in harmony with the forces that now cut their lives short.

The Middle Ages didn't offer much in the way of improvement. Europe in the 1200s and the 1300s still faced plagues, wars, and squalor. The Black Death alone killed a full one-third of Europe's population, a death toll approaching fifty million humans worldwide, between 1346 and 1353. Millions more perished in a second wave of this bubonic plague, which boiled up in 1517 then waxed and waned for another 53 years. Another hundred thousand Londoners, a quarter of the city population, died in the 1665 Great Plague of London. In these grim worlds, life expectancy at birth hovered in the mid-thirties, sometimes even lower.

And then things began to change.

By the 17th and 18th centuries, Europe was slowly crawling out of the pit in which it wallowed. Better understanding of hygiene along with slightly improved diet, plus the beginnings of scientific thinking, all served to start nudging the life expectancy upward. By 1800, folks lived close to forty years in much of the growing Western world, and while that was still low, pitifully low by our current standards, it *was* progress.

But on the horizon was the modern age.

The 19th century unleashed a torrent of change: vaccinations, antiseptics, steam power, global trade. Urbanization brought fresh danger but also new innovations. Things like clean water systems, public health movements, and better food storage, these seemingly simple advances began to work miracles.

By 1900, life expectancy in Europe and America had jumped to upwards of fifty years.

The new 20th century accelerated this ongoing trend. Antibiotics arrived in the 1940s, laying waste to the bacterial foes that had plagued and decimated humanity for millennia. Vaccines multiplied, surgery advanced, and with the invention of refrigeration food production was vastly improved while diets were completely revolutionized. By mid-century, at the dawn of the 1950s, life expectancy in the developed world was approaching and pushing past 65.

And now? Today, in many advanced nations, average life expectancy exceeds eighty, while in Japan and Hong Kong it now approaches 85. The once-unthinkable age of 100 is now achieved by tens of thousands of persons, and more and more folks reach and surpass that amazing mark with each passing year!

We have, in a mere blink of history, added thirty years, a third of a lifetime, to the human timespan. From fifty to eighty, in just over a century.

A good question is, how far can this trend go? But the *bigger, better* and more interesting question is this: Why *now*?

All this brings us to the brink of our present moment. We right now inhabit an era where medicine, genetics, artificial intelligence, and the sheer curiosity of humanity have begun and continue to come together. To unite, and to congregate.

This is the Great Convergence, and it is happening in ways that no ancient scribe could have ever imagined.

Chapter 4

Creation and Evolution: A False Divide

For way too long the human story has been framed as a battle between two opposing concepts, that of Creation versus Evolution.

In the schools, in politics, in religion, this choice has all too often been presented as binary; either you believe that human life evolved through natural and ongoing processes, or you believe it was created by an intelligent entity (God, to most).

This debate is a false divide, as the divide causes a false debate. It's a completely unnecessary war of ideas that has stifled and limited human understanding for more than a century. It has pitted people against each other in remarkable ways and has caused much dissension among folks who readily agree on just about anything else. In the late 1960s, young members of the Jehovah's Witness faith were required by their congregational elders to present their Science teachers with a free copy of the sect's newly published book, *Did Man Get Here by Evolution or by Creation?* The publication was heavily weighted to favor creation by [Jehovah] God in six consecutive one-thousand-year days and set to cast disfavor on the teaching of evolution in the public school systems. It was an unnecessary and antagonistic ploy, using children to boost their brand and trigger discord. But while pious religionists and hardcore atheists sling piss at each other, swearing it can only be one way or the other, many accept another possibility. That the opposing theories of creation by God and/or evolution by chance could conceivably describe multiple aspects of the same greater process.

For starters, evidence in favor of evolution is overwhelming. Earthly life is continuously and constantly adapting; bacteria evolve resistance to antibiotics; insects change in response to pesticides; plant life and the animal kingdom shift with their environments. Fossil records show certain species rising, changing, then disappearing, and sometimes even re-emerging in new forms. DNA itself is a record of life's long history of adaptation. Evolution is a real, observable process which describes how life itself changes over time.

But evolution is not a philosophy. It tells us how life changes, yes, but it doesn't say a thing about why life exists, or what force, if any, is responsible for the existence of the universe itself.

We are evolving physically; I say to those who disbelieve in evolution. Whether there is a creator or not, and being a man of science who subscribes to evolution does not mean there is no room for a creator, or higher power, or even a God, for those who want to call it that, call it Him, put a name to the concept. Evolution certainly does not require, or even suggest, that anyone forsake or abandon their belief in God, or any other spiritual or religious principle to which they subscribe.

Were we apes before men, and fish before apes, and one-celled amoebas before fish? I don't know, I wasn't there. But we are evolving now, still, so quite possibly the answer to that question is yes, although nobody wants to think that their oldest ancestors were grunting naked savages, slimy water dwellers, and tiny chunks of pulsating flesh before that. Because now we stand up on two legs, communicate and conversate with intelligence, and we serve and save ourselves and our fellows. Where do we go from here? As we stood upright and our tails fell off, was that the end of it? Are we done? I don't think so, in fact I think we still have a long way to go. Get taller? Thicker skins? Larger heads to accommodate our continually developing brains? Become more resistant to sickness and death? I don't possess the intellect to know the answer to any of that, but I do know we are evolving

physically. How, you will ask, do I have the gall to profess such a thing?

First, does anyone doubt that we are evolving technologically? Consider the recent advances that boggle the mind, the multiple gadgets that we own, use, and depend on, but have no idea what makes them tick. Think about the exponential advancements in medicine, and science! Where do you think all this ongoing technology and science came from? And continues to come from? It comes from *us,* of course. The human mind. Which must itself be evolving, if it continues to create and manifest such wonderful inventions, such advancement and improvement, such technology.

This is where the idea of creation comes in. Unfortunately, in the modern Western world, the very word *creation* is often shackled to those narrow and literal interpretations of some elderly bearded deity crafting the earth and all of its creatures in six symbolic days. Or else the word is cemented to a single religious doctrine insisting on being taken as absolute truth. But true creation is a far older and much broader concept, and its one that appears in cultures all around the world.

In the Dreamtime of Australia's Aboriginal peoples, creation is an ongoing process; the land, the animals, and the people are all linked in one great, ongoing and unfolding story. In ancient China, the Tao is the unnamed and unnamable force behind all of existence. Native American traditions speak of and rely upon a Great Spirit. Hindu cosmology describes consistent and ongoing cycles of creation and destruction that span vast ages. Buddhism speaks of the infinite arising and passing away of worlds. Even in Western philosophy, the idea of a *first cause* has long fascinated thinkers and scholars alike: what, if anything, set the universe in motion?

Creation, in this larger sense, is not necessarily a religious concept. It's not confined to any one image of God, or any specific deity. It's the suggestion that life, and possibly the universe itself, is not just an accident. Some form of intelligence, some pattern,

some force, a higher power or deeper order underlies our existence. Whether conscious or unconscious, divine or natural, this creative impulse shapes the cosmos.

When looked at in this manner, evolution and creation are not enemies, but rather they are partners. If some creative force gave birth to the universe, whether through the Big Bang, quantum fields, or through forces we don't yet even understand, then evolution would simply be the mechanism through which that creation manifests.

And maybe evolution itself is not totally blind, but rather is subtly guided or shaped by an underlying intelligence. Not necessarily the so-called God of any one religion or tradition, but instead a higher power, a universal intelligence that multiple cultures have glimpsed through multiple names. In such a light as this, those ancient stories of long-lived people take on a whole new meaning. If there was a time when humanity lived together and in a greater harmony with this creative force, before the erosion of disease, of violence, and environmental decline, then it is extremely possible that much longer lives were once common. Mayhap the decline of the human lifespan was not just purely biological, but also spiritual, a separation from the deeper forces of life.

Now, with modern science able to push back the limits of aging, we can once again approach this mystery, and from a different perspective. Science itself is evolving as we are presently learning how to manipulate the very mechanics of this evolution through such recent accomplishments as gene editing, stem cell therapy, and AI-guided medicine. In a sense, we are becoming the co-creators of both life's future and the future's life.

But are we merely evolving? Or are we finally rediscovering the ancient birthright which carries the potential for the longer and fuller lives that were always within us?

The answers are not yet clear. But one thing is for certain: that old battle between creation and evolution no longer serves any

purpose at all. To explore the true potential of human life, and the headier concept of human time, we must move beyond this fake and phony division. The time seems right to welcome a deep exploration and a wider vision of what we are, and by extension, what and who we may become.

End of
Part 1 – Looking Back

I hope you have enjoyed this preview of
Beyond the Future – Clocks, Calendars and the Great Convergence.

Following this will be a collection of interrelated fictional tales based on *Part 3* of this book, *Follow Up and a Look Ahead.* Tales of the time travel and parallel world genre, told from a completely new perspective!

Look for the first of these introspective fictional TTT® (for now) stories, *A Jack in Time,* on November 18, 2025!

Larry S. Gray is a perpetual student of life and a natural-born storyteller. Originally from New Jersey, he now lives in Ponce Inlet, Florida with his wife and dog. He's an avid reader and music lover who enjoys exploring both the open road and the deep dark canyons of the mind. He writes of time travel, parallel worlds, mind control, spirits, religion, and the surreal; all laced with dry humor, unexpected twists, and a steady stream of rock & roll references... This is his first solo non-fiction work.

For most of history, human life was short. Thirty to forty years, fifty if one was lucky. Then everything changed; fast! *Beyond the Future* is a sweeping, all-encompassing, mind-expanding exploration of how lifespan, population, and technology all began to rise; not slowly, but explosively, in only the past few centuries. Blending historical insight with scientific curiosity and speculative vision, this book traces the great convergence of human health & longevity, invention & discovery, and consciousness. From the myths of 900-year lifespans to the possibilities of age reversal and artificial intelligence, from open defecation to nerve implants, from lobotomies to neuroplasticity, this is the story of time itself. And how we might finally have enough of it. Whether you're a skeptic, a dreamer, or someone just trying to understand where we're all heading, *Beyond the Future* will challenge your assumptions and leave you asking the one question that really matters:
How much time is enough?