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"A beautifully written exploration of perhaps
the most important question in science."

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"In this vibrant, lively book, Paul Nurse, discoverer of some of the crucial genes that control the division of cells, takes a deep dive into biology by illuminating five of the essential characteristics of 'life.' The writing is so spirited and knowledgeable—and the five sections so full of wondrous revelations—that I could not put it down. This is a book that will inspire a generation of biologists."

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"Paul Nurse is about as distinguished a scientist as there could be. He is also a great communicator. This book explains, in a way that is both clear and elegant, how the processes of life unfold, and does as much as science can to answer the question posed by the title. It's also profoundly important, at a time when the world is connected so closely that any new illness can sweep from nation to nation with immense speed, that all of us—including politicians—should be as well informed as possible. This book provides the sort of clarity and understanding that could save many thousands of lives."

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"Wise, visionary, and personal. I read the book in one sitting, and felt exhilarated by the end, as though I'd run for miles—from the author's own garden into the interior of the cell, back in time to humankind's most distant ancestors, and through the laboratory of a dedicated scientist at work on what he most loves to do."

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