THE PERFECT THEORY

A Century of Geniuses and the Battle over General Relativity

PEDRO G. FERREIRA

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
BOSTON NEW YORK
2014
Contents

PROLOGUE ix

1. IF A PERSON FALLS FREELY 1
2. THE MOST VALUABLE DISCOVERY 12
3. CORRECT MATHEMATICS, ABOMINABLE PHYSICS 28
4. COLLAPSING STARS 47
5. COMPLETELY CUCKOO 66
6. RADIO DAYS 85
7. WHEELERISMS 100
8. SINGULARITIES 118
9. UNIFICATION WOES 137
10. SEEING GRAVITY 152
11. THE DARK UNIVERSE 173
12. THE END OF SPACETIME 193
13. A SPECTACULAR EXTRAPOLATION 209
14. SOMETHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN 223

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 237
NOTES 239
BIBLIOGRAPHY 258
INDEX 270