

# Nostalgia

A novel resurrection.

**Hiroshi Goto**

Mercury Lam Meinhart's thudding heart almost burst through her chest. There's no way for them to detect the theft, she reminded herself. Because what she had taken was organic. A single strand of hair with its root intact. If she kept her wits she'd leave this mausoleum unnoticed and be on a life trajectory far beyond the stunning boredom of an under-published literary historian. To be free from eating Soygen 3 for perpetuity! This thought alone brought tears of joy to her eyes.

The soft noise of her polyform shoes. Desperation seeped from her second-best suit. Her thudding heart. Dimly, she wondered how she'd been capable of this act. Weren't the mandatory gene tweaks meant to eliminate all abhorrent behaviour?

"Miss —"

Mercury felt faint.

"Miss, Miss!"

Mercury, partially digested Soygen rising in her gorge, turned around.

"Ha-haaaa!" a young man crowed. His companion, a young woman with jewel lights in her scalp, tried to hop out the patterns of their game, but she stumbled.

"Miss, again!" the young man gloated.

A micro siren wailed. "Game-playing is forbidden in the museum," a quiet digitalized voice declared. "Cease activity. You have five minutes to exit the facility. Non-compliance will result in loss of leisure credits."

"Delete!" the young woman cursed. "This was a requirement for Victorian Lit. class!"

"Come on," the young man mumbled. "We can go on a sim-tour instead."

As Mercury turned around, her heart slowly began beating again. A smile played on her lips.

"Whaddya got?" Leo Yoshida slurred.

Image and sound were not to grade, but Mercury was certain her ex was in the middle of a sim-high. What time was it in Hong Kong? She was sure Leo didn't care. "Remember my pitch? A reality show, but high art?"

"Oh, yah. Nostalgia angle. We're ripe for it here, Merc. It could fly. You always had good ideas."

"More than an idea. I've already begun



ripening the perfect candidate. Guess who?" "Shakespeare? Uhhh, the *Crime and Punishment* guy? I dunno."

"Is your barrier secure, Leo?"

"You know I'm always clean," he leered. "My old man made us split up because of the merger, but I've always had a soft spot for you."

Mercury rolled her eyes, but she couldn't stop smiling. She could see her credit ratings breaking through the 'class-free' barrier. "Brontë," she whispered. "I got a Brontë!"

"Who'zat?" Leo asked.

"Gates!" Mercury swore. "Didn't you attend Required Lit. lectures? I'm cloning Charlotte or Emily Brontë. One of the sisters. I took a hair from a mourning brooch at their shrine in Yorkshire."

"Whose facilities are you using?" Leo asked, suddenly all business. He must have turned off his sim program. "What's your estimated time of fruition?"

"I've rented an off-Net portable speed-Queen. ETF in six months."

"I can't believe they're still legal out there! They've lost their licence in Asia Major and Australasia," Leo spluttered.

"Tried and true," Mercury wrinkled her nose. "You know their motto. 'No one need ever outlive their pet again!' Listen, I've sent across the specs already. Find four more writers to make this show work. Otherwise, I'm walking with my Brontë. I can groom her as a novelty personality."

"No! I'll have a contract for you in a few

minutes. How will I find the other nostalgia writers?" Leo moaned.

"Include me as a consultant. Ideas are my forte," Mercury bared her teeth.

All those writers who had left pieces of themselves. Archives and special collections. Treasure hordes, they were. Filled with papers with pieces of skin, hair, even blood. A splatter of Hemingway. A drop from Mishima's seppuku.

And not only writers! The second season could be tortured artists. Van Gogh. Frida Kahlo. They could be groomed in special holo environs to replicate their original circumstances. Their 'development' could be broadcast on the Nets and betting pools could be arranged. The copies still weren't exact replicas and the technique hadn't eradicated every dysregulation, but a few abnormal traits would only make the artists

more interesting. More tortured. It would be the biggest credit-making artistic freak show in the history of entertainment.

"I've sent the contract!" Leo's eyes shone. "Merc, Merc, what can I have delivered so you can start celebrating now?"

"Mmmm," Mercury closed her eyes. This was what it felt like to 'have the splice of life'. Oh so heady... "I've always wondered what hydroponic oysters tasted like."

There was no denying it. The Brontë was a male.

"Gates! Gates!" Mercury swept the data from her desk. She couldn't risk going to Yorkshire to steal another piece of their lives. But Branwell Brontë! He'd had been a second-rate artist. A clichéd alcoholic.

Mercury tapped her finger against her lips. No need to throw out the clone with the amniotic fluid.

It wasn't too late to introduce hormone therapy. Branwell could be turned into a female. And Emily had been an odd creature, practically autistic.

Mercury smiled. No one would notice a thing. And by the time they did, they'd be well into their second season with a whole new cast.

Mmmmm. She loved oysters. ■  
Award-winning author of *Chorus of Mushrooms* and *The Kappa Child*, Goto is a genre-bending writer whose most recent book is a collection of short stories called *Hopeful Monsters*. She has a novel pending with Penguin Canada.