

Wetware: A Novel



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In 2026 in an unnamed city that is darkly familiar and vividly possible, Hal Briggs is a biotech engineer. His specialty: encoding biology into digital form. In other words, manufacturing life. Already he'd created small animals that chirped cheerfully about a product, a beaver that sang a ditty about toothpaste. He'd designed extreme-sport survival games that transported players into fantasy dimensions. And now, the job keeping him up at all hours of the night has become his obsession—developing a coding system to produce the human body. People. Gray-skinned and brutish, designed to do the dangerous and dull jobs no one else wants. At corporate giant Galapagos Wetware, business is booming. Buyers want creatures with more finesse. They want workers who are good with handguns and who have the ability to deceive. Workers who are cunning, who thrive on terror, who are indifferent to a plea for mercy. They want workers who look more human. The prototypes are emerging slowly in the ice-cold lab. Briggs' s code is like poetry, like perfectly structured haiku. He begins to add forbidden details—a sense of humor, mathematical brilliance, an instinct for music, a profound longing. With each detail Briggs adds, the more infatuated he becomes, until he adds the most dangerous detail of all—the ability to reproduce. In the bowels of Galapagos Wetware, in a room filled with blue-tinted snow, Hal Briggs watches as his latest creation—he has named

her Kay—blows him a kiss, while Jack, the male next to her, mouths, “Don’ t worry.” What could possibly go wrong?Craig Nova, a master of the modern American novel, creates a thrilling tale of the ethics of desire, the metaphysics of technology, and the dangerous mystery of manufactured beauty in a future becoming more real with every passing day.

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