Kiss Me Twice

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Novella.

A group of trendy-somethings milled outside the police line, clearly torn between curiosity and the need for a caffeine fix...

Kiss Me Twice Details

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From Reader Review Kiss Me Twice for online ebook

Sue CCCP says

4.5 stars

I reviewed this short story as part of the anthology Robots: The Recent A.I. Full review of that volume at http://coffeecookiesandchilipeppers.b...

Scott Huang is a Portland Police Detective, aided by the police department AI, Metta, who always appears to him as Mae West. When they are called to investigate the murder of a local property developer and then Metta's chassis is kidnapped, Scott has to work with Metta's back up, who has her own problems with existential angst.

This has a real noir feel to it, even though we are dealing with a world full of virtual reality interfaces and robotic servants. This atmosphere is mostly due to the interaction between Scott and Metta, who is very well versed in Mae West's scripts and always finds a funny quote to comment on the action. We also get to explore various attitudes to AIs whilst enjoying plenty of twists and turns and red herrings.

Alethea says

This story did some great world-building, and did a nifty job of examining some of the quandaries of independent AI's--with one rather startling gap at the end, where an interesting question was just jumped over in a line. The fact that I gave this four stars ("I really liked it") should indicate that I didn't think it was a fatal flaw, but the unexpected gap was...startling, in a story that had otherwise done such excellent work. There may have been good plot-reasons, to keep from slowing the end down--but it still felt odd.

Gene says

This was a fun detective story that reminded me so much of Caves of Steel by Isaac Asimov. It's a futuristic crime/thriller that pairs a human and robot as they try to uncover who murdered a prominent citizen.

I liked the personalities that appeared in the story and I liked the couple of plot twists that were thrown in. I think it would have been better if the end of the story didn't unfold in just a few pages. I don't like endings that drag out, but this one could have been filled in a little more.

The author explores the idea of humans depending too much on computers. I think this was handled pretty well. This could have easily been written as a full novel to further explore those details, flesh the characters out even more, and detail the action a little better.

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prk says

Reviewed as part of the 2012 Hugo Voter Packet.

Synopsis: Detective Scott Huang and his AI partner, Metta (who presents to Huang with a Mae West persona), are investigating a murder, when Metta's chassis is kidnapped. Restored from backup onto a new chassis, Metta and Huang attempt to solve both cases, whilst someone uses the original Metta chassis to try and corrupt the new Metta and throw Huang off the scent.

Plot: Kiss me Twice is at heart a police procedural, and the plot is formed around the investigation of two apparently separate cases which end up being related. Despite the simplicity and almost formulaic nature of the plot, it's executed well, with an unexpected twist or two along the way.

Characters: We follow two main characters, Detective Scott Huang, and the Mae West persona of Metta, the Police Department's Artificial Intelligence. Both are well written, and the interaction between the two gives us useful insights into both. Despite being a short novella, we're also given insight into a couple of Huang's colleagues, and his mother whom he lives with, for no real plot reason, but to provide an opportunity to see Huang and Metta interact with others, and develop their characters.

Scope: The novella has a fairly narrow scope, it's set in the near future with the addition of AIs. Kowal makes the most of this, with the occasional reference to AI rights, and some of the technology which allows the AIs to communicate, from earbud & glasses, to stand alone display nodes. Despite this narrow scope, there's never a real sense of it in the novella, we're left with the impression that this is just one detective on a couple of cases in a single city, and there's a world full of other stuff going on elsewhere.

Writing: The writing worked well, nothing jarred me out of the novella, and I found myself wanting to read just another page before taking a break, which I consider the sign of a good story. In particular, the writing of the Metta and Huang conversations is well done, with Metta's use of Mae West quotes adding a nice touch of humanity to the AI and some needed comedic relief to the story.

Pacing: The story was well paced, it opened with the approach to a crime scene, took us straight into it, then hit us with Metta's kidnapping before we had time to get bored. It was then a progression of investigation and leads building the suspense until the final encounter and resolution.

Other Comments: Without going into too much detail, I thought the resolution of the case relied a bit too much on good luck, rather than thorough investigation and insight. That's apparently not unheard of in police investigations though, so I'm willing to give that one a pass. Kudos also have to be allocated for the last line of the novella, from which it derived its name, and the way it ended the story with a chuckle.

Overall: I'm a bit of a sucker for a police procedural, and very much enjoyed Kiss me Twice. Other than the investigation itself, the Huang and Metta interactions were well written and entertaining to read. Although disappointed when the novella finished, it was from a desire to read more, rather than any dissatisfaction with what I'd read.

Alexandra says

Bored me, unfortunately. Especially coming after "Silently, and Very Fast" (the Valente novella also nominated for the Hugo), the prose in particular was boring. A very different, and more 'normal,' exploration of the meaning of AI, compared to the Valente... the police procedural side was ok, and there was a nice twist, but the characters did not grab me.

A.M. says

Portland. A near future where a lot of things are the same but AI exists. Even the barista is an AI. Neil Patterson, a property developer has been found dead on the roof of a building. He's been shot. Someone called the police from the local coffee shop to report it.

> Huang clenched his fists and stepped onto the terrace, hating the reminder that he was the junior detective on the homicide team. The only reason he got this case was that it was on a roof and Oakes was scared of heights. Otherwise, he got the easy ones, the ones that Metta had already solved and all she needed was a flesh and blood officer to do the legwork. Not that anyone ever said that, but it was pretty obvious.

Metta is the police AI that acts as each officer's partner, but with subtle differences. For Huang, Metta looks like Mae West, but that's her choice.
Mid investigation of the murder, someone breaks into the head office and 'steals' Metta's chassis. She's offline (probably dampened somehow) and can't tell them where she is.
While everyone else is thinking of it as a security breach, Huang who thinks of AI as individuals, thinks its more like a kidnapping. They reboot her from a backup but she's not the same.
Who stole her? Who is involved? And does it have anything to do with the murder?
***
I found this rather interesting. And now I'll have to go find the episode of Writing Excuses where they discuss writing it.

A Hugo nominated novella. Read it here:
http://maryrobinettekowal.com/journal...
4 stars

Summer says

Cute AI buddy cop mystery.

A.J. Bauers says

Ever wonder what rights would be afforded to artificial intelligence in the future? If they would be treated as citizens? Or how they might react knowing they've been activated from a backup? These were some of the questions answered in Mary Robinette Kowal's beautiful novella, Kiss Me Twice.

The story follows the relationship between Huang, a detective, and Metta, and artificial intelligence leased

out to Huang's police station. Metta is able to interact with members of the police force individually and simultaneously, but for Huang alone, she appears as the sultry star, Mae West. Their friendship is interrupted the day the police station is breached and Metta's Chassis, which hold's Metta's brain, is stolen.

The playful interaction between Metta and Huang is absolutely delightful. And because Metta can speak with the entire police force, we can compare their relationships against Huang and Metta's and recognize how it's so special.

Joanna says

I've been listening to the archive of the podcast Writing Excuses and I just hit Season 8: episode 24, which was an analysis of this novella. I wanted to read it before I listened to the episode, and lo: it's free on Mary Robinette Kowal's blog

http://maryrobinettekowal.com/journal...

This was incredible. I enjoyed it so much. It had aspects of the mindset of AI that I liked about Ancillary Justice but with an easier setting. It had aspects of Rule 34 in terms of a computer-augmented police force, but the AI has personality. It is a speculative police procedural on roughly the same level of tone as Lock In, maybe with less humor,although there's definitely some.

The big thing that the amazing dynamic between the point of view character, Scott Huang (bonus points for an Asian protagonist who isn't a stereotype!) and the police AI. MRK talked about maybe adapting this into novel 1 of a series. I hope she does because I want to read it so badly.

Laurel says

Imagine if AI were real? Now imagine that one AI could interface with every police officer on an investigation. Instant records checks, complete maps and analysis of every crime scene. A genius researcher at your fingertips. Now, what would happen if the criminals got ahold of the AI?

I don't know if this novella will win the Hugo, but it should! A damn fine police procedural with an AI twist! Read it, read it now!

Julia says

"Kiss Me Twice" is a Nebula-nominated novella that first appeared in Asimov's magazine. Mary Robinette Kowal made it available on her blog as a birthday gift to her readers linked in the Goodreads entry. She also discussed writing the story on her podcast Writing Excuses if you're interested in craft/back story.

In a future Portland, police detectives work alongside as an artificial intelligence named Metta to work cases. Metta changes her interface to suit her different users. For Detective Scott Huang, she appears as silver screen star Mae West, using all West's quips at her disposal. For other detectives, she's simply another tool or machine. I almost wish the novella had explored AIs and how they were treated more.

I liked this novella quite a bit. The mystery/police elements worked quite well. The only thing that irked me was the sloppy security/firewalls/protocols necessary for some of the plot contrivances to work. If an AI has access to that much sensitive data (i.e. police, forensic, etc) and people were concerned about the AI being compromised, I'd think their security would be stronger and *not* necessarily dependent on Metta herself.

Norman Cook says

This is a police procedural that features two partners: human detective Scott Huang and his artificial intelligence partner, Metta, whose default persona is Mae West. When Metta's chassis is stolen, Metta is restored from backup to a new chassis and the duo soon connects the crime to a larger conspiracy. I liked this novella a lot. The characters were well-rounded, with clear personalities. The mystery was satisfactorily resolved, although there was a bit of luck involved. The world was consistent and easily pictured. I could see this expanded into a novel; I definitely hope Kowal writes more about this future society.

Kristin says

Rather interesting futuristic world with different 'levels' of Artificial Intelligence. Metta, our police AI, has found herself kidnapped and her Beta must help Detective Huang figure out where her Prime is. Nicely convoluted with good concepts. Could have been fleshed out just a bit more in my opinion. My main complaint was the endless May West quotes. Not a fan.

Julia says

I love MRK's writing but I didn't love this. I've been reading her shorter works, For Want of a Nail, Evil Robot Monkey, Lady Astronaut of Mars, and they're brilliant. Evil Robot Monkey? Seriously, how can she make me cry in less than a thousand words?

Maybe it was because it was a "police procedural" as so many have described it or a mystery. I'm not a mystery reader. I don't want to be surprised by whodunit at the end of the book. I'd rather know whodunit at the beginning of the book and let it be revealed how shedunit.

All this said I'll still be reading as much Kowal as I can.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

Portland detectives with AI partners.

It was a nicely developed story, but I felt like the entire premise was flawed, making it harder to enjoy. If I can open a program to find my iPad if it is stolen, surely the development of AI technology in a secure environment like a police station would have some level of security, and once you think about that, this story

just doesn't work as well.

John says

[I read this novella as part of the Hugo Voter Packet in 2012.]

This story almost makes me glad that I still have 'For Want of a Nail' still to read from last year's Hugo Voter Packet, since it completely drew me in. I wasn't this gripped by any of the previous three novellas, and I really liked the pacing of the plot. I suspect this was not hurt by the fact that I've always been rather fond of crime fiction! As I finished it I wanted to read it again, and I definitely want to seek out more of Kowal's work.

It's a police procedural story. Structurally, it's the same as the previous novella; a story told in chronological order from the perspective of a single character. I found it interesting that it told the story of two partners, but that one of them was an AI that the human character talked to and interacted with via his VR glasses. I liked the dynamic between the two, and the pacing of the story was excellent.

The undercurrent of the rights available to AIs was visible to the reader but not a big deal; I think, if it had been, it might have made the ending feel somewhat different. This was well illustrated by the AIs that crop up during the course of the novel – neatly reflecting the attitudes of their owners or masters – as well as the reactions from the human characters to the AIs in the world described. I would be very interested to see some of these ideas explored in more detail, especially if Kowal delivers something that draws me in as brilliantly as this.

For reasons I can't adequately put into words this one tops my list of novellas this year. I would dearly love to read more about this partnership.

Iain says

Fast-paced and entertaining sci-fi detective story with some nice allusions and twists. Occasionally overcomplicates things, though, and I wasn't fully convinced by the resolution.

Omly says

Reviewed as part of the 2012 Hugo packet.

This novella was completely different in style from the others I have read from the packet, which makes it a little harder to compare directly. The world building was very well done. The characters were developed and interesting, and the plot was excellently paced. I would very happily read more about the main characters and was really sad to have finished it

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Glennis says

This novella was part of the Hugo voter pack that I read this past summer. A SF police procedural with a murder investigation being interrupted by the police's AI mainframe stolen out of the police station. Not only is this a straight mystery there is also commentary on how people treat AIs. A good read and if there is more in this this world later on I certainly would read it.

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ambyr says

[The *butler* did it? I mean, really? *Really?* (hide spoiler)]