The Brooklyn North Murder

Erica Obey
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In Erica Obey's clever cozy mystery novel *The Brooklyn North Murder*, a librarian teams up with her AI invention to solve a murder in a sleepy college town.

Mary Watson is a reference librarian in the rural Hudson Valley, where she uses her computer smarts to generate an AI bot, Doyle. She programs Doyle to write detective novels by analyzing the plots of classic crime stories. When an investor who's taken an interest in Mary's tech skills vanishes from a public event, she and Doyle make the ideal sleuths to determine what happened to him. In the process, Mary risks being implicated in massive data breaches, financial fraud, and a murder cover-up—unless she and Doyle can outwit the actual culprit.

Mary is a memorable heroine, and Doyle complements her well. Modeled on a 1930s sleuth, Philo Vance, Doyle is a stylish dandy who engages in entertaining banter with his creator. The image of Mary appearing to argue with her phone in public places never gets old. What's more, the pair share a palpable affection for one another that is explained in a flashback to Mary's unhappy childhood. And a campus security officer is a worthy source of support: he, too, engages with Doyle, in addition to introducing elements of danger and romance to Mary's tale.

After the murder occurs at the book's midpoint, however, the mystery stumbles, and the "who" in whodunit volleys between two credible suspects. And although the book's use of detective plots is original and imaginative, the more obscure stories it references will spark recognition in only the most devout mystery fans.

The Brooklyn North Murder introduces an outstanding pair of amateur sleuths in a librarian and her classic mystery-versed AI.

PAULA MARTINAC (January / February 2023)