

Bill Frankl has mastered the art of the miniature with his virtuoso collection of short-shorts, *Romance and the Vending Machine*, tiny tales that illuminate the consequences of the seemingly mundane choices couples face in the course of a relationship. This collection of forty-two stories highlights five settings where choice derails the expected for the couples involved - lost opportunities, in the dubious relationship, when the marriage is troubled, when fate intervenes, at death's door. Marriage with intent to kill the wealthy lover and marry the ne'er do well boyfriend backfires. On the eve of his fiftieth anniversary, a once skittish groom rues the choices he made. The e-mail romance backfires when they decide to meet. Disenchanted, God sends a dead man back with apocalyptic knowledge. Frankl's knowledge of human nature gained during his years as a clinical cardiologist is as evident as his skills as a writer. If these stories were Scotch whiskey, they would be single malt.

~ *Sara Thiermann, Ph.D., MFA, Radnor, Pennsylvania*